



THE LORD BUDDHA'S APPROACH TO GOOD HEALTH

GB 410E



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GB 410

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May, B.E. 2552

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PREFACE

The Lord Buddha's Approach to Good Health, GB 410 has two parts. The first part has to do with food intake and elimination. The second part has to do with the Lord Buddha's balanced approach to good health. In the first part, the student will learn about the roles of food and water, the benefits of different kinds of broth all the way to the practice of drinking one's own urine as a remedy for illnesses. The student will also learn about dental hygiene, the harm of ignoring the urge to urinate and defecate, constipation, hemorrhoids, and how to treat diarrhea. In the second part, the student will learn about the balanced approaches to good health both during the Lord Buddha's time and in the present days. There are four balanced approaches to good health: 1) the balanced posture; 2) the alignment of the body structure through physical exercises; 3) the prescribed physical exercises; and 4) relaxation of the muscles and tendons. In the last chapter, the student will learn how good habits play an important role in keeping the body structure in a balanced state.

This course material has been prepared by the committee members. It is possible that even after many rounds of editing and cross-editing, the material may still contain mistakes. The Committee hopes that it will receive comments and feedback from the student which will allow it to further improve upon this course material.

The Committee
August, B.E. 2550

COURSE SYLLABUS

1. Description of the Course Material

GB 410 The Lord Buddha's Approach to Good Health

This course is about the Lord Buddha's approach to good health. The course material can be divided into two parts. The first part deals with the medicinal aspect of food and water, how to keep oneself in good health, etc. The second part has to do with the balanced approach to good health both during the Lord Buddha's time and in the present days and includes the four balanced approaches to good health. The last chapter deals with the importance of good habits in keeping the body structure in a balanced state.

2. Course Objectives

- a. To enable the student to realize the importance of keeping himself healthy
- b. To enable the student to learn about the Lord Buddha's approach to good health
- c. To enable the student to cultivate the habits which are conducive to good health

3. Topics Covered in the Course

Part 1: The Roles of Food Intake and Waste Elimination

Chapter 1: Paying Attention to What You Eat and Drink

Chapter 2: Waste Elimination

Part 2: The Lord Buddha's Balanced Approach to Good Health

Chapter 3: The Balanced Approach during the Lord Buddha's Time

Chapter 4: Understanding Illnesses from the Standpoint of a Healthy Body

Chapter 5: The Balanced Approach to Good Health in the Present Days (1)

Chapter 6: The Balanced Approach to Good Health in the Present Days (2)

Chapter 7: Making It a Habit to Keep the Body Structure Balanced

Appendix

METHOD OF STUDY

1. Self-Study

The steps for studying each chapter are as follows:

1. Spend an hour each day on the course material, and finish each chapter within one to two weeks.
2. Begin each chapter with a pre-test to assess the student's prior knowledge of the material covered in the chapter. Complete the exercises provided for the chapter. After completing the chapter, the student should assess his/her comprehension of the material covered by completing the test at the end of the chapter.
3. Use other learning aids especially the broadcasted programs as detailed in 5).

2. Self-Evaluation before and after the Lesson

The student should complete the pre-test before beginning each chapter in order to assess his/her prior knowledge of the subject. The student can then pay special attention to what he/she has no knowledge of. The student should also complete the test at the end of each chapter. The student will then know how well he/she has learnt the material covered in the chapter and whether he/she is ready to proceed to the next chapter. A satisfactory grade is when the student can score correctly about 80% of the test. The self-evaluation will only be meaningful if it is carried out honestly.

3. The Text

The student should begin the chapter by first going over the layout of each chapter in terms of its topics, concepts, and objectives before proceeding with the detailed study.

After having finished reading the details of each topic, the student should write down its main points and complete the exercises and the test provided for the chapter. This way the student will know how well he/she understands the material covered and how he/she can apply what he/she has learnt to his/her daily life.

4. The Exercises and the Tests

The exercises and the tests are part of the overall evaluation. Therefore, complete all the exercises, the pre-test and the test provided for each chapter according to the given time table. The student should not wait until the last minute to do the exercises because such practice is missing the point. Moreover, the student will not be able to deliver his/her completed exercises on time and will be penalized as a result. The penalty may cause the student to fail the course altogether. The student should only look up the answers at the end of the chapter after the tests have been completed.

INTRODUCTION

This course material is divided into two parts. The first part deals with food intake and waste elimination. It is based on a book by the Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Luang Phaw Dattajivo), Vice-Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya which is a compilation of his Dhamma lectures on the subject of the Lord Buddha's Approach to Good Health. The second part deals with the Lord Buddha's balanced approach to good health. It is based on a book by Dr. Thavara Kasomsan, the physician who is an expert on balance therapy.

The Lord Buddha teaches that our illnesses come from the following eight causes:

1. The gallbladder.
2. The phlegm.
3. The wind.
4. The gallbladder, the phlegm, the wind.
5. Inclement weather.
6. Lack of proper exercises.
7. Overtaxing the body.
8. Retribution for past misdeeds.

The first four causes come from the inappropriate use of food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. The initial symptoms appear as a result of a problem in the gallbladder or phlegm or wind problem in the stomach, the intestines, and other organs. If the problem is not taken care of in time, the situation can become chronic as well as complicated by other problems and one may suffer simultaneously from gallbladder, phlegm, and wind problems.

Most people these days do not exercise care in their use of the four requisites. It appears that food may be the only area where some care is exercised as reflected by the saying, "You are what you eat". It can be concluded that the first four main causes of illnesses arise from the careless use of the four requisites.

The fifth cause of illnesses arises from inclement weather which in turn comes from two other factors as follows.

1. The lack of knowledge about the working mechanism of the body
2. The lack of care in using the four requisites during inclement weather

It can be said that the fifth cause of illnesses results from recklessness which comes from the lack of understanding about the body and the natural environment.

The sixth cause of illnesses arises from the lack of proper exercises. The body can be compared to a vehicle in that it needs to move on a regular basis in order to work well. A body, which has not been exercised regularly, cannot perform well and can easily become ill. It can be said that the sixth cause of illnesses results from the lack of working knowledge about the body as well as the lack of self-discipline.

The seventh cause of illnesses arises from the overtaxing of the body. Therefore, these illnesses can be avoided by the judicious use of the body.

The eighth cause of illnesses arises from retribution for past misdeeds. These illnesses are almost impossible to avoid. However, the Lord Buddha teaches us the following ways to deal with such an illness:

1. One must first submit to the fact that his illness has resulted from the retribution for his own past misdeeds. Therefore, he must bear it and try to avoid committing such misdeeds ever again. Moreover, he must not try to blame others for his illness.
2. The next thing he has to do is to continue accumulating merit to the best of his ability. The new merit can help heal a less serious illness while easing a serious illness. However, should one have to die from such an illness, he will be destined for the States of Happiness.

It can be concluded that the eight causes of illnesses arise from our inattention in the following areas:

1. Inattention which comes from the lack of understanding about the true nature of the body.
2. Inattention which comes from not paying proper care to the body.
3. Inattention which leads to the commitment of misdeeds.

The Lord Buddha teaches, **“Rebirth in the Human Realm is rare. It is rare for a human being to hear about Buddhism. It is rare for a human being to hear the Dhamma. It is rare to have the opportunity to attain the Dhammakaya.”**

The opportunity to attain the Dhammakaya is enhanced by a healthy body. Attainment of the Dhammakaya is the source of untold happiness. Therefore, it behooves us to apply what we learn from this course to keeping our body healthy so that we can continue to practice the Middle Way Meditation or Vija Dhammakaya.

PART 1

THE ROLES OF FOOD INTAKE AND WASTE ELIMINATION

PART 1

THE ROLES OF FOOD INTAKE AND WASTE ELIMINATION

Sources of Information for this Part

The Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Luang Phaw Dattajeevo) has been taking care of his health and the health of the resident monks, novice monks, Upasakas, and Upasikas of Wat Phra Dhammakaya for a very long time for the very reason that he understands how good health is instrumental to the pursuit of Perfections. Although Luang Phaw Dattajeevo is not a physician, he has garnered information about keeping the body healthy from the following three practices.

1. Applying the Lord Buddha's approach to good health

This is carried out by observing how his work, his food intake, his postures, his exercises, and his sleep affect his body as well as the texture, the color and odor of his urine and feces. Luang Phaw says that even the best physician cannot heal our body if we do not learn to take good care of it our self.

Details about the Lord Buddha's approach to good health can be found in the '**Girima-nanda Sutta**'¹

2. Questioning the attending physicians

Whenever Luang Phaw Dattajeevo falls ill and has to be attended to by a physician, Luang Phaw will take the opportunity to question the physician extensively about the cause of his illness and the way to prevent it from recurring.

3. Researching other sources of information

Our body is like a car and we are like its driver. It is useful for a driver to have working knowledge of how the car works and how each of its parts functions. In the same manner, it is useful for us to know about the different organs and parts of our body and how they work by studying books on allopathic medicine, traditional Thai medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, physiology, anatomy, chemistry, biology and physical exercises.

Luang Phaw's emphasis is on preventive maintenance. From his study, he has concluded that aside from the illnesses which result from retribution from past misdeeds, most of the illnesses occur as a result of the lack of self-discipline. This shows up as indulging in certain foods, wearing clothes which are inappropriate for the weather, inattention, poor posture, poor ventilation in the bedroom, etc. Therefore, the best way to keep our body healthy is to exercise self-discipline and to stop doing the very things which cause us to be ill.

¹ *Aṅguttaranikāya Dsakanipāta* MCU, vol.24, p.129 *Ādīnavasaññāi*

CHAPTER 1

PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 1

PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK

- 1.1 The Role of Water
- 1.2 Food Is Medicine
- 1.3 Herbal Food
- 1.4 The Benefits of Soup
- 1.5 Drinking Urine
- 1.6 Food Consumption on the Road
- 1.7 Dental Hygiene

CONCEPTS

1. Many illnesses result from our inattention in the consumption of the four requisites especially food. For examples, if we do not adhere to a regular mealtime, we may suffer from stomach problems; if we eat too much during our travel, it may cause us to have a fever; if we do not drink enough water, we may suffer many ailments such as a headache, nasal congestion, a fever, boils, constipation, etc.
2. The best medicine for us is the food we eat as well as the water we drink. In other words, when we eat enough food and drink enough water, when we have our meals at the same time every day, when we eat nutritious food regularly especially soup, we will have a better chance of being healthy. In addition, our own urine and herbal food are effective in healing different diseases.
3. We only have one set of permanent teeth; therefore, we need to take good care of them. We should avoid food which causes cavities such as candy and we must learn to brush our teeth correctly.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to exercise care in consuming the four requisites especially food.
2. To enable the student to realize that the best medicine for us is the food we eat, the water we drink, and even our own urine.
3. To enable the student to care for his/her teeth correctly and to avoid the kinds of food that can cause cavities.

PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK

1.1 The Role of Water

Generally, human beings can go for weeks without food but only a few days without water. Therefore, it is important that we understand the role that water plays in our health.

1.1.1 The Importance of Water

Water makes up two-thirds of our body¹ and water is necessary in every bodily function. Water is needed in the biochemical reactions which give rise to energy and the maintenance of life. Water is needed in blood circulation, in the delivery of nutrients and oxygen to every part of the body. It is needed in respiration. It is needed in the digestive system and in the absorption of nutrients. It is needed in waste elimination through sweat, urine, and feces. It is needed in the lubrication of different organs such as the eyes, the joints, the abdomen, lining of the lungs, etc. It is needed in the maintenance of the body temperature.

Science teaches that water is a poor conductor of heat in that when we pour water into a clear beaker and heat it, soon we can see bubbles forming in the bottom of the beaker but the water at the top is still cool. On the contrary, when we heat a piece of metal at one end, very soon the other end will become very hot as well. This is because metals conduct heat well. Being a poor conductor means that water is a good insulator. Water also plays an important role in maintaining our body temperature and keeping it constant. In addition, water protects our body against the elements. It keeps our complexion healthy, clear, and elastic. Therefore, we must make sure that we drink enough water every day.

1.1.2 What Happens When Our Body Does not Get Enough Water?

Since water is needed in every bodily function, the lack of adequate water can cause the body to malfunction. How much the body malfunctions depends on how deficient in water the body is. Examples of such malfunctions are as follows:

1) Stress on the Internal Organs:

When there is not adequate water in the digestive system, which includes the stomach and intestines, it has to work harder. When it has to work hard regularly, its function will eventually become impaired.

When the body does not receive enough water, blood will become more viscous because blood is made up of 90 per cent water.² When the viscosity of blood increases, it will put stress on blood circulation which in turn affects the function of important organs for examples:

¹ Water for Life, page 9

² Ibid.

The heart has to work harder to circulate blood around the body. The lungs have to work harder, since viscous blood makes the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide sluggish therefore less efficient. It takes more passes for blood to be oxygenated. The kidneys have to work harder to eliminate waste materials from viscous blood as well as to reabsorb as much water as possible in order to conserve the level of water in the body. This results in concentrated urine which contains concentrated waste materials. Therefore, concentrated and yellow urine is an indication that the kidneys are working too hard. Moreover, the lining of the bladder can become inflamed as a result of having been in close contact with the concentrated waste materials.

2) Headaches

Insufficient water intake causes blood to increase in viscosity and reduces the total blood volume in the body. The reduced blood volume in turn causes the blood vessels to constrict and the heart-rate to increase. Since there are nerve fibers around the blood vessels, constriction of the blood vessels causes the nerve fibers to rub against each other and the result is a headache. In addition, whenever the heart pumps blood to the head, it has to work against the force of gravity, viscous blood with its reduced volume means that less blood gets pumped to the head. These factors coupled with the fact that the head contains more nerve fibers than other parts of the body; therefore, it is more sensitive to pain.

Now should we ever experience such a headache, it means that we must hurry to drink a lot of water in order to restore the normal volume of our blood. Once normalcy is established, the headache will be gone and medication will not be necessary.

3) Nasal Congestion

Insufficient water intake causes the water in the body to increase in temperature and this make us feels congested and experience a runny nose. This situation is like when the cooling system in the car runs low in water, the car can get overheated and steam pours forth.

4) Fever

Fever results when the body temperature rises above 37 Celsius. Fever has different causes but most of the time it results from infection or insufficient water intake. Metabolic functions produce heat in our body and so do our physical activities. When there is not enough water in the body to dissipate the heat generated by our body, we end up with a fever.

5) Cold Sore

Cold sore, a sore throat, and tonsillitis are caused by many things but the most common cause is insufficient water intake. When the body does not receive enough water, its temperature will rise. At the same time, the cells in the body are dehydrated and cannot be insulated from the heat. This situation has an adverse effect on the lining of the organs and can result in other health

problems. When cold sore erupts, it appears as a red and swollen spot inside the mouth which later turns into a clear boil. When the boil bursts, it can be quite painful. If the spot appears in the throat, it causes a sore throat. If it appears in the tonsil, it causes tonsillitis.

A sore throat or tonsillitis may easily be further complicated by the germs in the oral cavity and the respiratory tract such that antibiotics may be needed to treat the symptoms.

6) Constipation-Hemorrhoids

One of the important functions of the large intestine is the re-absorption of water from the body waste. Therefore, with insufficient water intake, the large intestine will increase its moisture re-absorption. As re-absorption of water increases, the feces will become drier and harder. If the ingested food does not contain any fiber, the feces will be further compacted. Since the large intestine will have to work much harder to excrete the feces, it can result in constipation. Moreover, the hardness of the feces can cause anal fissure and anal bleeding. When this happens regularly, hemorrhoids can result.

7) Gallstone and Kidney-Stone

When we do not drink enough water, we end up with smaller volumes of urine and there are longer intervals between urination. As a result, the residence time of urine in the bladder can be too long and some insoluble waste materials will begin to precipitate out. The accumulation of insoluble precipitates over time can eventually lead to the formation of gallstone and kidney-stone.

8) Strained Tendon

The lack of water intake is one reason that causes the muscles, the tendons, and connective tissue to shrivel because these body parts are made up of 80 per cent water.³ Shriveled tendons and connective tissue tend to stick together and may become twisted, a situation where no amount of exercise or massage can rectify. If you find that you regularly suffer from strained tendon and sprained ankle, know that you are not drinking enough water.

9) Not Feeling Rested after a Night's Sleep

Some people feel drowsy in the morning and are reluctant to get out of bed even though they have had a good night's sleep. They may feel that they are not getting enough rest when in fact given a couple glasses of water right after they get up, they will feel immediately refreshed. Therefore, it is very helpful to drink two to three glasses of water as soon as we get up in the morning.

10) Feeling Sleepy after a Meal

This situation is caused by too much food or too little water. This makes the stomach content too difficult to digest.

³ Exercise - Panacea, page 21

The Lord Buddha teaches that every time we sit down to eat, we should stop eating at 4 – 5 bites before we feel full and finish the meal by drinking a glass of water.⁴ The reason is that by the time the last 4 – 5 bites reach the stomach, we will feel full right away. Moreover, the glass of water will dilute the stomach content and make it easier to digest; therefore, lighten the load of the stomach and small intestine. In this way, we will not feel sleepy or fall asleep when we practice meditation right after our meal.

1.1.3 What Causes the Body To Be Dehydrated?

- 1) When we do not drink enough water to satisfy our body's need.
- 2) When we spend a long time under the sun, in the wind, in front of a fan, or over the stove and forget to compensate for the situation by drinking more water.
- 3) When we do not exercise on a regular basis, it causes the muscles and connective tissue to contract and they cannot efficiently absorb water however much water we take in. If we do not exercise but drink a lot of water, we will only have to urinate more often because the water we take in is not being efficiently absorbed. It is like the unplowed field which cannot absorb much water and the water will only run off.
- 4) When we drink very cold water, it will cause our muscles, stomach, and intestines to contract, hence cannot absorb water efficiently. Therefore, about five minutes after we drink very cold water, most of it will be eliminated through the urine and does not get absorbed by the body.
- 5) When we have to travel abroad during the winter time and we have to stay in heated room, the air can be especially dry. This can cause the body to lose water. At times, we may even experience a nosebleed.

1.1.4 Symptoms Which Arise from Water Deficiency

Some of the symptoms include a dry mouth, a dry throat, thirst, cracked lips, dry skin, a dry and hoarse voice, constipation, fever, etc. These symptoms are warning signs that the body is suffering from water deficiency. They also show that we are not paying enough attention to our body. A very easy way to check whether our body is suffering from water deficiency or not is to notice the color of our urine in that the yellower our urine is, the more our body is suffering from water deficiency. What we want is for our urine to have a clear or light yellow color.

1.1.5 The Benefits of Drinking Warm Water

Warm water is more easily absorbed by our body than cold water, since it is closer to our body's temperature. The Most Venerable Luang Phaw Dattajeevo had a personal experience with this fact when he was traveling in the desert of China. Although he had already made sure to drink a lot of water but the air in the desert was so dry that he eventually showed signs of water deficiency. His lips and his

⁴ **Khuddakanikāya Theragāthā**, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, vol. 26, p.500

face chapped while the color of his urine became very yellow. He immediately asked for cold water and drank as much of it as he could. It turned out that he had to use the restroom every five to ten minutes afterward and his body was not getting re-hydrated. He started to feel somewhat feverish when he suddenly remembered that when he was a child, the adults around him used to sit around and sip hot tea as they chatted with each other without having to get up to go to the restroom frequently. He then asked for warm water to drink. Afterward, the interval between trips to the restroom went from 10 to 20 to 60 minutes and eventually to three hours and his body was re-hydrated. Therefore, when our body is not getting enough water or when we do not feel quite right or when we feel feverish, we must never drink cold water but should drink warm water or sip hot water instead.

1.1.6 Drinking Enough Water

To satisfy our body's need of water, it is not enough to say that we must drink ten or twenty glasses of water a day. The reason is that we must also take into account other variables such as the weather and our activities. Suppose we find that drinking ten glasses of water a day is sufficient, this no longer holds on the day that we are exposed to the elements such as a lot of sun or a lot of wind or when we sweat a lot after a demanding exercise. In these cases, we may need to drink 14 to 15 glasses of water instead.

One rule of thumb is to notice the color of our urine. Clear or lightly colored urine is an indication that our body is getting enough water.

The correct way of drinking water is not to do it only a few times a day by drinking 3 – 4 glasses each time so that a total of more than ten glasses of water is drunk each day. Drinking water in this manner is like watering a plant with a lot of water all in one go. It will only cause the water to overflow. However, if the plant is watered periodically throughout the entire day by the same amount of water, all of it will get absorbed.

What we should do is to drink 2 – 3 glasses of water as soon as we get up in the morning. Before breakfast, we can drink another glass or half-a-glass of water but no more than this because it may dilute our digestive juices, hence, lessen their digestive powers. Right after the meal, drink one more glass of water. Our stomach and small intestine are already digesting the ingested food and need water to help lubricate the food mass. When the meal consists of a lot of meat or protein, more water will be needed by our digestive system. In this case, additional water should be drunk at certain time intervals after the first glass. This will ensure effective digestion as well as no drowsiness. Researchers have found that the biochemical processes which take place during the digestion of protein require more water than in the cases of starch and fats.

For those of us who need to travel to work in the morning, drink only one glass of water after breakfast. Don't drink any more water in the next hour or if you feel thirsty, then you should only take small sips of water. This way, you will not have to be troubled with finding a restroom on your way to work. Once at work, then

go ahead and drink as many glasses of water as you like. It will not have any negative effect on the digestive system then.

Two hours before bedtime it is wise not to drink too much water; otherwise, you may have to get up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night.

People who suffer from a kidney problem or a serious heart problem cannot drink a lot of water because it may cause them to develop edema or to gasp for breath. These patients need to consult their physicians about the way to drink enough water for their body's need.

1.1.7 Luang Phaw Dattajeevo Shared His Personal Experiences

One day Luang Phaw Dattajeevo felt as though he was coming down with a cold and his head was pounding. He started drinking water periodically so that within two hours, he had drunk about three liters of water. He began to feel drowsy so he went to lie down but had to get up to go to the bathroom after a while. He decided to stay up to drink more water and within a couple of hours, all the cold symptoms disappeared completely. This experience bears witness to the fact that when we feel a cold coming, we should drink water frequently and in an amount sufficient to help our body do its best work to restore our health.

Water also plays an important role as a laxative. To use water as a laxative, we should drink as much warm water as possible as soon as we get up in the morning because no digestion is taking place then and our stomach is empty. Therefore, our body cannot absorb all of the water which has been drunk. Most of the water will flow through the stomach, the small intestine, the large intestine, and to the rectum. At this point, if we walk around a bit, our movement will encourage the intestines to contract faster while the large amount of water which we have taken in will go directly to increase the volume of our feces and soon we will feel the urge to defecate.

1.2 Food Is Medicine

Have you ever wondered why some people recover from their illness faster than others?

Luang Phaw Dattajeevo has found that when a sick person refuses to eat, drink, sit up, get up and walk around, ignores the urge to urinate and defecate but only lies in bed, the person's illness will be prolonged because he is sick in both the body and the mind.

On the contrary, a sick person that continues to go through the daily routine of eating, drinking water, going to the bathroom, sleeping at regular hours, will recover quite fast from his illness.

Luang Phaw told us that since his childhood, he had never been allowed to do as he pleased even when he was ill. His father used the military style in training him. However ill he might be, when it was mealtime, his mother or his sister would bring him food on a tray. On one occasion, he had left his food untouched but when his father saw the untouched food, he hollered, "It's mealtime, why aren't you eating?" The answer

was, “I’m not hungry and I don’t want to eat anything.” Luang Phaw’s father said in a commanding voice, “Whether you’re hungry or not, whether you want to or not, you must eat when it’s your mealtime.”

Whether we are sick or well, when it is our regular mealtime, our body will automatically secrete digestive juices into our stomach. Without food for the digestive juices to work on, they will work on our stomach lining instead which will result in a lot of gas and queasiness. If the situation is allowed to continue, we may suffer a stomach condition on top of whatever illness we are currently suffering.

Luang Phaw’s father has also taught him another important lesson since his childhood and that is “Food is the best medicine in the entire world.” Therefore, whatever medication we may be taking for a specific illness at any point, its role is secondary compared to food. Even when we feel so sick that we have no appetite, we must still try to eat whatever amount of food we can so that our stomach and our digestive system can continue to function properly.

It is due to his training since childhood that allows Luang Phaw to suffer illnesses at the most for only a couple of days because only his body gets sick but never his mind.

It behooves us not to overreact to any physical illness but to continue to eat when it is our regular mealtime regardless of whether or not we feel hungry and to try to sleep when it is our regular bedtime. In this way, we will have a better chance at a speedy recovery.

1.3 Herbal Food

Herbs and spices besides adding flavors to our food serve three different purposes as follows:

1.3.1 They Prevent Food from Becoming Rotten

Since Thailand’s climate is hot and humid, it causes microbes such as bacteria and mold in the food to grow rapidly, hence the food can become rotten prematurely. Therefore, Thai people add herbs and spices to their food in order to retard the growth of microbes as well as to add flavors.

Herbs and spices exert their influence on microbes through two physico-chemical processes called osmosis and plasmolysis. Osmosis occurs when a microbe is in an environment where there are less solutes than those within the microbe, hence, water in the environment migrates to the microbe. Plasmolysis is the reverse process in that when a microbe is in an environment where there are more solutes than those within the microbe, water inside the microbe will migrate to the outside. Examples of solutes include salt, sugar, etc.

In the case of hot soups which are consumed while they are hot, herbs and spices are not as necessary because the heat will discourage growth in the microbes.

1.3.2 They Eliminate Gas or Wind from the Stomach and Intestines

Gas-forming microbes produce gas as one of its metabolites. Such microbes in the ingested food can cause the stomach to suffer gas pain and bloatedness. Therefore, in order to help the body removes the gas formed by the ingested microbes, herbs and spices must be added to the food. These herbs and spices include ginger, galingale, shallot, cardamom, cloves, etc. These herbs and spices contain volatile oils which help the body to burp or pass wind. Ginger helps the body to burp, hence removing the gas formed in the stomach and small intestine while galingale helps the body to pass gas, hence removing the gas formed in the large intestine.

Most of the herbal medications used to relieve gas pain and bloatedness available in the market contain extracts of ginger, cardamom, cloves. In the old days, people used to eat pickled food with ginger or shallot in order to encourage burping and prevent gas pain and bloatedness.

1.3.3 To Increase the Fire Element in the Body

Herbs and spices, which contain the Fire Element, can be divided into four categories:

- 1) The Hay-Fire type herbs and spices are those that provide a sudden burst of heat. These include the different kinds of chili-peppers. They do not provide much heat to the small intestine but they add flavor and aid digestion.
- 2) The Wood-Fire type herbs and spices are those that provide heat more slowly but substantially. These include shallot, garlic, lemongrass, etc. They provide a more lasting heat to the stomach and small intestine.
- 3) The Charcoal-Fire type herbs and spices include ginger, galingale, kaempferia, basil, etc. They provide heat which can last for hours.
- 4) The Coal-Fire type herbs and spices include wild ginger, black pepper, etc. The heat they provide can last for days. They are good for the cold season.

1.4 The Benefits of Soup

Our forefathers spent a great deal of time learning about what is edible and what is not, what combination of food is beneficial to the body, etc., unlike most people these days who seem to know very little about the food they eat and most often choose their food according to how it tastes and what it looks like rather than how it benefits the body.

In the past, people used to prefer the broth in such soup dishes as Shrimp Tom Yum, Chicken Tom Yum, Fish Tom Yum whereas people these days prefer the meat in them which is difficult to digest and throw away most of the broth which contains the nutrients.

At the end of WWII, the Japanese people were aware of their small sizes when compared to those of westerners. The Japanese government had held many meetings with food experts in an effort to improve the daily dietary intake of their people. The result is that younger generation Japanese have grown much taller.

Luang Phaw told us that during one of his trips to Japan, he had observed that for breakfast the Japanese ate only a little soft-boiled rice but many cups of broth. Our Tom Yum soups are equal to Japanese broths when it comes to flavor and nutritional value if we but make sure to drink all the broth in these soups.

1.5 Drinking Urine

Drinking one's own warm urine provides two main benefits as follows:

1.5.1 It Can Help Reduce Fever

A high fever can bring on other health problems; therefore, it is necessary to reduce the fever as soon as possible. Generally, room-temperature water is used to sponge the body. In this case, the use of warm water will not help the body to dissipate heat because of the low heat differential between the body and the water while the use of cold water will only constrict the blood vessels in the skin and hinder the heat dissipation of the body.

Buddhist monks, who are trekking in the outdoors, prefer to reduce their fever by drinking their own urine. The reason is that since urine is a waste product of the body, its consumption will drive the body to eliminate it as quickly as possible. And the faster the urine is eliminated, the faster the heat will be dissipated from the body and the fever can be quickly reduced. This method is best used when one is by oneself and far away from help.

Generally, the urine is left to cool before it is drunk. The amount is not fixed but depends more on how much one can drink. How many times one must drink the urine depends on how fast the fever is reduced. Generally a few times are enough.

1.5.2 Urine Can Heal Certain Illnesses

During the Lord Buddha's time, He had advised the sick monks to treat their illnesses by drinking their own urine. After more than 2,500 years, this practice is still being carried out.

How does urine work? Normally, whenever any foreign bodies such as germs enter the body, the body will produce white blood cells which in turn produce antibodies to fight the invading foreign bodies. Antibodies are small enough to be secreted by the kidneys along with the urine. Therefore, when one drinks one's own urine, it is like drinking the vaccine which contains the antibodies against the foreign bodies that make the body ill in the first place. The re-introduction of antibodies will kill off the remaining germs and the body will recover quickly. Moreover, these antibodies will prevent the body from being infected again with the same germs.

1.6 Food Consumption on the Road

There are certain things we should do during our travel and they include:

1.6.1 Stop Eating before We Feel Completely Full

We should stop eating when we feel partially full so that we will not feel bloated while we are on the road. As a university student, Luang Phaw Dattajeevo sometimes had to move such livestock as cattle, water buffalos, horses, and pigs from Bangkok to Chiangmai or from Chiangmai to the south. He noticed that if the livestock ate their fill before being transported, more than half of them would end up sick by the time they reached their destination and could hardly be led out of the truck. The reason was that the rough truck ride gave them indigestion. Some animals even died as a result. Luang Phaw solved the problem by giving them a partial feed before they were loaded up the truck and were given water during the trip. By the time they reached their destination, all the animals were lively and ready for their next feed.

In the same manner, during a long trip, we are usually sitting down the entire time. Therefore, the food in our stomach tends to digest slowly and if we have a bumpy ride as well, we may experience bloatedness, nausea or other ailments.

1.6.2 Drink Sufficient Amount of Warm Water

Sipping warm water frequently will keep the cells in our body sufficiently hydrated. We may have to visit the restroom more often but at least we will not feel fatigued at the end of our trip.

Thailand is hot and humid and our body is used to high humidity. When we travel to a country with low humidity, our body may be dehydrated in spite of adequate water intake. We may suddenly experience symptoms of dehydration such as chills, dryness in the chest, in the throat, and in the mouth, a nosebleed, etc.

To remedy the situation, turn the hot shower on at full-steam and allow the water to run for a while with the bathroom door open. Moisture from the hot shower will permeate the bedroom and your symptoms should disappear within ten minutes.

To prevent the problem from recurring, before you go to sleep you should fill the bathroom sink or the tub with enough water so that it can help moisten the air in the bedroom. If the sink or the tub does not have a plug or cannot keep the water in, you may have to turn the shower on warm and let it run slowly all night long.

1.7 Dental Hygiene

Most of the dental problems arise from the habit of sucking on hard candy as well as improper brushing.

1.7.1 Hard Candy Causes Tooth Decay

The reason is that after sucking on a piece of hard candy, the sugar which remains in the mouth for a long while will be turned to acid by oral bacteria. The acid formed will corrode the enamel of the teeth and cause tooth decay. People in the old days kept their teeth until their old age because there was no hard candy then. Therefore, before giving in to hard candy, try to picture yourself toothless.

1.7.2 The Proper Way to Brush Our Teeth

We must brush our upper teeth in a downward motion and our lower teeth in an upward motion but never across from left to right or right to left. We may brush our teeth correctly but some of us tend to brush too forcefully and cause the gums to recede. Once they recede, they cannot come back to their original position. Receding gums will expose more and more of the tooth and this can subsequently lead to sensitive and loose teeth.

The purpose of brushing our teeth is to remove residual food as well as plaque from in-between the teeth and under the gum-lines which are the causes of bad breath. We should brush our teeth and gums correctly and gently with a soft toothbrush. You can obtain more detailed information about dental hygiene from your dentist.

It is very important that we take good care of our teeth because problem teeth or missing teeth cannot properly chew the food we eat which in turn can cause other stomach and intestine ailments such as gas pain, bloatedness, constipation, and hemorrhoids.

Exercises

After you finish studying Chapter 1, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

ELIMINATION OF BODY WASTE

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 2 ELIMINATION OF BODY WASTE

- 2.1 Negative Consequences of Ignoring the Urge to Urinate and Defecate
- 2.2 Constipation and Hemorrhoids
- 2.3 Treating Diarrhea

CONCEPTS

1. When we are in the habit of ignoring the urge to urinate, we can experience negative consequences such as bladder problems, blood problems, inflammation of the liver and kidneys, allergies, strong body odor, and kidney-stone. When we are in the habit of ignoring the urge to defecate, it can cause the re-absorption of waste materials, constipation, diarrhea, hemorrhoids, etc.
2. Most incidents of diarrhea are caused by food poisoning. When we suffer from diarrhea, it is important that we drink plenty of water which is supplemented with minerals. The water we take in will help dilute the toxin in the body and facilitate its elimination. In this case, there is no need for medication, since the symptoms will stop once all of the ingested toxin has been eliminated. However, in a severe case, it is necessary to consult a physician.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to know about the negative consequences of ignoring the urge to urinate or defecate.
2. To enable the student to properly treat himself when he suffers from diarrhea and to help take care of others who are suffering from diarrhea.

ELIMINATION OF BODY WASTE

2.1 The Negative Consequences of Ignoring the Urge to Urinate and Defecate

2.1.1 The Negative Consequences of Ignoring the Urge to Urinate

When we travel, are in the middle of a sporting event, or in a meeting, we have a tendency to ignore the urge to urinate and sometimes for a long period. Or after we have fallen asleep, we do not feel like getting up to use the bathroom and eventually the urge goes away. When we are in the habit of ignoring the urge to urinate, we are setting ourselves up for such health problems as bladder problems, blood problems, liver and kidney problems, allergies, strong body odor, etc.

1. Inflammation of the Bladder

The initial symptom of an inflamed bladder is the urge to urinate again about five minutes after having just urinated. When the inflammation continues for a week, the bladder will lose its control and let loose drops of urine right after we are finished urinating.

Frequent urination results from the fact that when we ignore the urge to urinate, some of it will be reabsorbed by the body and re-eliminated¹. In addition to an inflamed bladder, some people also experience bacterial infection. These bacteria are normally found around the anus but they sometimes migrate to the urethra and into the bladder. When we ignore the urge to urinate, it allows these bacteria the time to multiply and grow and eventually causes the bladder to become inflamed. The results are frequent urination, painful itchiness during urination, cloudy or bloody urine. In some cases, the bacteria spread to the kidneys and one experiences a high fever, chills, and pain in the area of the back where the infection is.

2. Blood Problems

Urine is slightly acidic whereas red blood cells, white blood cells, and lymph are slightly alkaline. The re-absorption of urine back into the body through the blood vessels can affect the alkalinity of these biological entities. The amount and frequency of urine re-absorption can lead to such blood problems as impaired blood and low blood count.

3. Inflammation of the Liver and Kidney

The liver's function is to filter and destroy toxic materials such as food contaminants in the forms of pesticides, monosodium glutamate, etc. The kidney's function is to eliminate waste metabolites and other contaminants contained in the blood. In other words, the kidney does the job of purifying our blood.

¹ Traditional Chinese Medicine

The habit of ignoring the urge to urinate causes the urine to be re-absorbed into the blood thus increasing the waste contents of the blood. These cause both the liver and the kidney to work harder and become inflamed.

4. Allergies

The habit of ignoring the urge to urinate also causes more body waste to remain in the body for a longer period and eventually impairs its working mechanism. The results are bouts of hives, acne, impaired lymph, rashes at the area where the thighs rub against each other, allergies, breathing difficulties.

Luang Phaw Dattajeevo said that before he was ordained, he used to suffer from itchy rashes and allergies. He was allergic to just about everything including the smell of residual pesticides, the smell of the burning body during cremation, etc. Sometimes he could not sleep because he suffered from a severe case of itchiness.

He noticed that medication relieved the itchiness for a while but as soon as he had to travel and he began to ignore the urge to urinate, he would feel some discomfort in his bladder on the first night but by the following night, he would experience severe itchiness anew. He had suffered from this ailment for 20 years from the time he was 20 to the time he was 40 before he had any idea what was causing it. As a teenager, he played sports and often times had to wait at least four hours to use the restroom. As an adult, he worked very hard and was in the habit of ignoring the urge to urinate.

5. Strong Body-Odor

The re-absorption of body waste in the urine can cause one to have a strong body-odor.

6. Kidney and Bladder Stone

When the bladder has to hold urine for a very long period, calcium in the urine can begin to precipitate out and deposit in the system. With regular accumulation, stone can eventually form in the bladder, in the uriniferous tubule, or in the kidney.

7. Constriction of the Bladder

When a person often ignores the urge to urinate, it will cause the muscles and connective tissue of the bladder to constrict and reduce in size. This reduces its capacity to hold urine by half which means that the person has to urinate more frequently.

Therefore, we should not hold our urine for too long a period. We should also engage in physical exercise regularly. We can jump rope, do Yoga exercise, or any other forms of exercise continuously for at least 30 minutes on a regular basis. This way, the muscles and connective tissue of our bladder can relax and once it is fully relaxed, it can be returned to its normal capacity. Another

method which can help reduce constriction in the bladder is to have a masseuse massage the abdomen and the area around the tailbone.

8. The Inability to Practice Meditation Effectively

Master Nun Chand once said to Luang Phaw Dattajeevo, “If you hold your urine too long, in the future you will have to go to the bathroom often and your meditation practice will not progress well.” Anyone who cannot yet attain Phra Dhammakaya but continues to hold urine for a long period at a time will meet with slow progress. We can see that a small thing like holding our urine can lead to huge problems in meditation practice.

2.1.2 The Negative Consequences of Ignoring the Urge to Defecate

Human feces have two main characteristics as follows:

- They are semi-solid.
- They stink but they do not have a rotten smell. Stinky smell is normal. Feces smell because of such gases as butane and methane. When feces are two days old, they will develop a rotten smell.

What happens when we are in the habit of ignoring the urge to defecate?

1) Re-absorption of Waste Materials into the Bloodstream

When we do not use the bathroom as the need arises, wastewater in the feces will be re-absorbed into the bloodstream. When this occurs on a regular basis there can follow such negative consequences as impaired blood, low blood volume, inflammation of the liver and kidney, allergies, strong body odor, etc.

2) Alternating Constipation and Diarrhea

When more and more wastewater in the feces gets re-absorbed into the bloodstream, feces will become harder and harder. Hard feces can irritate the anus and chronic irritation can result in hemorrhoids.

When feces remain in the rectum for a few days, they also serve as food for the fecal bacteria which secrete toxic substances as their metabolites. This causes the feces to rot and results in diarrhea. Therefore, alternating episodes of constipation and diarrhea are an indication that one is in the habit of ignoring one's urge to defecate.

2.2 Constipation and Hemorrhoids

2.2.1 Constipation

The following are the main causes of constipation.

- 1) The body is not getting enough water which results either from insufficient water intake or the poor capacity of the body to retain water. In the latter case, it may stem from poor musculature which results from the lack of regular physical exercise. It may also result from drinking very cold water regularly or from being exposed to excessive heat such as working in front of a hot stove.
- 2) Infrequent consumption of fruit and vegetables. When we eat mostly meat or food which contains only a small amount of fiber, constipation can result. We need to eat fruit and vegetables because the fiber in the fruit and vegetables work to scrape body waste from the wall of the intestines and facilitate its movement down to the rectum.
- 3) Ignoring the urge to defecate. It is very important that we do not ignore the urge to defecate if we want to prevent constipation from occurring.
- 4) Infrequent physical exercise. A sedentary lifestyle is not conducive to the proper working of our intestines and body waste can accumulate for a few days at a time. This can cause alternating constipation and diarrhea as explained earlier.

How Can Severe Constipation Be Relieved?

It can be relieved by three different methods as follows:

- 1) By using an old remedy: As soon as you get up in the morning, make a pot of tea containing just a few tea leaves. Keep drinking the hot tea until you feel the urge to go to the bathroom. If you still do not feel any urge, make another pot of tea and drink it while you carry out some light exercise. Be sure to use the bathroom as soon as you feel the urge. If this does not work on the first day, repeat the practice for another day. It should not take longer than three days before you have the result you want. Moreover, this practice will help establish the habit of having a bowel movement in the morning.
- 2) By using a laxative: A laxative should be in the form of food such as hydrated tamarind (the sour variety is better than the sweet variety), ringworm bush tops, etc. Food type laxatives work better than regular commercial laxatives. Moreover, the use of regular commercial laxatives will make our body become dependent on them in that if we do not take them, our system will not work.
- 3) By building up the anal muscle: When you are ready to use the bathroom after a bout of constipation and the feces are hard, push a little then tighten the anal muscle. Repeat the action a few times. If nothing comes out, then spray water into the anus to help lubricate the feces. Alternate the water-spraying with the pushing and anal-muscle tightening action until you pass the feces. The pushing and anal-muscle tightening actions help the large intestine move the feces

downward. These actions also strengthen the anal muscle and improve its performance.

2.2.2 Hemorrhoids

Regular bouts of constipation can result in hemorrhoids; therefore, it is very important that we take good care of our body so as to prevent constipation. But for those who are already suffering from hemorrhoids, there are two ways to help with the situation.

- 1) If anyone experiences inflammation of the anus where it becomes so swollen and painful that he can hardly take a step, he can alleviate the pain within minutes by doing the following.

Heat a ripe Makruit fruit (a citrus fruit) over a lamp such as a reading lamp, 60 to 100 watts until it is quite warm. Test it on the back of the hand before placing it on the anal area. When the fruit cools down, heat it again and place it over the anus. Repeat this action for about 10 minutes and 20 to 60 per cent of the swelling will have already been reduced.

The treatment area may become irritated. Soothe the irritation by applying a skin cream. After a night's sleep the swelling will be reduced by 60 or 70 per cent.

For first time sufferers, the treatment may cause the inflammation to disappear completely. For chronic sufferers who have experienced continuous blood loss, they must consult a physician.

- 2) Know how to properly exercise the anal muscle. This exercise can give instant result. Each time you use the bathroom and after you are finished, continue to sit on the toilet and exercise the anal muscle by tightening it and relaxing it alternately for a total of 300 to 400 times. If you do the exercise regularly, in no more than a couple of weeks, both your constipation problem and hemorrhoids will almost by magic disappear altogether.

2.3 Treating Diarrhea

We have diarrhea when we experience loose or watery stool more than three times in a row in a relatively short period of time. We may experience mucous stool or bloody, mucous stool. We may also vomit and experience abdominal pain.

Acute diarrhea is caused mainly by food poisoning. The ingested food may have been tainted with germs or chemicals such as preservatives, pesticides, etc. Generally what happens is that a group of people shared a meal together and afterward many members suffer the same symptoms. How quickly the symptoms are brought on and how violently they are depend on the amount of the tainted food ingested, the germs and the chemicals involved, and each member's immune system.

Generally our body is equipped to deal with poisonous materials by quickly eliminating them from the system. When the intestines are working frantically to remove the poisons, we may feel nauseous; we may vomit, experience abdominal pain, and make frequent trips to the bathroom.

Therefore, as soon as we experience diarrhea and we do not feel too nauseous just yet, we should drink a lot of water especially water containing minerals. These come in individual packets and are available at the pharmacy. This way our system can be quickly replenished. In serious cases where the body goes into shock and the patient becomes unconscious, fatality may result.

Drinking a lot of water will help dilute the poisons in the intestines and help the poisons to be quickly removed. Once the poisons are removed, we will feel much improved and there will be no need for medication. In more serious cases where one experiences severe abdominal pain or vomits violently, one will need to consult a physician immediately.

We may have noticed that when cats or dogs experience discomfort involving their digestive system, they will run to the yard and start to graze on grass. Five or ten minutes afterward, they will vomit and whatever ailed them will be removed from their system. They seem to instinctively know how to treat their digestive problems.

We too can learn to take care of our health problems by retracing our steps in order to find out what may be causing our problem and taking steps to address it. Moreover, should we need to consult a physician we can fill him on the details so that he can know how to treat us.

When we learn to pay more attention to every facet of our life, we will develop a good sense about our self not only in the area of our health but in other areas as well. We will be in a better position to seek the advice of a qualified individual in order to better address the problem which arises.

Exercises

After you finish studying Chapter 2, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to Chapter 3.

PART 2

THE LOAD BUDDHA'S BALANCED APPROACH TO GOOD HEALTH

CHAPTER 3

THE LORD BUDDHA'S BALANCED APPROACH

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 3 THE LORD BUDDHA'S BALANCED APPROACH

- 1.1 The Meaning of the Balanced Approach
- 1.2 Causes of an Illness
- 1.3 The Balanced Approach to Good Health during the Lord Buddha's Time

CONCEPTS

The daily routine of Buddhist monks during the Lord Buddha's time reflected the fact that the monks took care of their health by using the balanced approach. The Lord Buddha taught the monks to always keep a balanced posture and maintain balance whenever they had to change from one posture to another. He taught the monks to keep themselves healthy by not remaining in any one posture such as walking, sitting, standing, or lying down for a prolonged period. He also taught them to exercise their body and keep it nimble by doing yoga exercises, by going on an alms-round, by practicing walking meditation. Massages were also used to relax their muscles and tendons.

OBJECTIVES

To enable the student to learn about the balanced approach to good health that has been practiced since the Lord Buddha's time.

THE LORD BUDDHA’S BALANCED APPROACH

3.1 The Meaning of the Balanced Approach

The balanced approach means the use of preventive maintenance to keep the body healthy. The balanced approach has four components as follows:

1. Keep the posture balanced at all times whether one is sitting, lying down, standing, running, or doing anything. In other words, one must try to keep one’s spine well-aligned at all times.
2. Adjust the body structure in order to keep it well-balanced.
3. Exercise regularly to keep the body structure well-balanced.
4. Relax the muscles and tendons to increase good circulation by employing massages, yoga exercises, acupuncture, etc.

No human body is as well proportioned and balanced as the Lord Buddha’s body. The reason is that He possesses the Perfect Man body. When the Lord Buddha extends his arms fully to either side of His body, the distance between the fingertips of the right hand and those of the left hand is equal to His height. His body is as upright as that of a Brahma being. His teeth are perfectly uniform, etc. The Perfect Man body is the original human body. It is perfect and strong. While our Lord Buddha was searching for the way out of suffering as a Bodhisatta, he had been able to survive extreme forms of self-mortification because of his Perfect Man body.

By comparison, the body of all other human beings is deformed. Be that as it may, the human body is instrumental in the accumulation of merit and the pursuit of Perfections. Therefore, the Lord Buddha advises every Buddhist monk **to keep the body upright during meditation practice, to maintain mindfulness, and to be aware of each breath.**¹ In researching the Tipitaka, it is found that the Lord Buddha had given such an advice 89 different times altogether.² It only goes to show how important it is **to keep one’s spine erect at all times.**

In the Sekhiya-vatara, there were recorded disciplinary rules regarding how not to walk and sit in a lay devotee’s house: Do not rock your body when you are walking. Do not raise your heels when you are walking. Do not rock your body when you are sitting down. Do not hug your knees when you are sitting down. Do not rest your arm on the floor and

¹ **Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta**, *Dighanikāya Mahāvagga*, MCU, vol.10, no.374, p.302

² **Thai Tipitaka Program**, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, ver.1

lean your body against it, etc.³ Proper deportment not only inspires faith in the laity but also keeps the monk's body straight and graceful.

3.2 Causes of an Illness

The Lord Buddha not only teaches the monks to keep the body erect in every posture, He also teaches them the eight causes of an illness as follows:

1. A dysfunctional gallbladder.
2. Dysfunctional mucous glands.
3. Wind or gas.
4. Combination of a dysfunctional gallbladder, dysfunctional mucous glands, and wind in the body.
5. Climate change.
6. An irregular change of posture.
7. Physical over-exertion.
8. Past misdeeds.

Illnesses which result from an irregular change of posture are illnesses which result from the lack of regular exercise as well as from remaining in one particular position for a long period at a time such as sitting or standing etc.⁴ When our body remains in one position for too long, it can become fatigued and cause the body to become ill. In the Commentary, it was written that the Lord Buddha exercised regularly and relieved tired muscles by changing His posture from time to time.⁵

3.3 The Balanced Approach to Good Health during the Lord Buddha's Time

The daily routine carried out by the Buddhist monks during the Lord Buddha's time helps keep the body from remaining in one position for too long. These activities include sitting in meditation, going on an alms-round, practicing walking meditation, keeping the temple grounds clean, building and maintaining the temple, lying on the right side while maintaining mindfulness during sleep, etc. When a monk goes on an alms-round, it is not only the means to grace the merit-makers and receive sustenance but also to exercise his body and massage his feet. The reason is that when a monk goes on an alms-round, he usually has to walk barefooted early in the morning for 2 – 3 kilometers at a time. Walking bare-footed brings his feet in contact with pebbles, stones, etc., hence, allows his feet to be massaged at the same time.

³ Sujib Punyanubhab, **Tripiṭaka for Civilian**, Bangkok, p.181-182

⁴ **Putta Sutta**, *Atṭṭhakathā Aṅguttaranikāya Catukanipāta*, MBU, vol.35, p.256

⁵ **Mūlapariyayā Sutta**, *Atṭṭhakathā Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇaṭṭa*, MBU, vol.17, p.35

In terms of walking meditation, the Lord Buddha had this to say, “It helps the body digest whatever food and drink it receives and it keeps the body healthy.”⁶ Part of the monks’ daily routine includes calisthenic exercises to keep the body flexible and to remove muscle aches and pains.⁷ It was mentioned in the Jarā Sutta that massages were also used to relax their muscles.

“On one occasion, the Lord Buddha was staying in the Pubbaram Temple which had been built by the lay devotee Visakha in the city of Savatthi. The Lord Buddha left His place of solitude in the evening to sit with His back toward the setting sun. Phra Ananda attended to the Lord Buddha by using his palms to massage the Lord Buddha’s body.”⁸

These records show that a Buddhist monk’s daily routine reflects the balanced approach to good health. The Lord Buddha teaches the monks to keep a balanced posture and to keep the back straight at all times whether they are sitting, standing, lying down, etc., and they are not to remain in one position for too long a period. They keep their body flexible through calisthenics. They exercise the body by going on an alms-round and practicing walking meditation. They employ massages to relax their muscles and tendons.

However, there is a very small difference between the balanced approach to good health during the Lord Buddha’s time and in the present days and it involves the sleeping position. According to the Thai physician, Dr. Tavorn Kasamasan, sleeping on one’s back is the best sleeping position. This is in contrast to the Lord Buddha’s practice which is sleeping on one’s right side. However, one research conducted by a government agency for public health confirms that sleeping on one’s right side is the most conducive to a good night’s sleep. The research report was published in March, B.E. 2550 and had the following details. “Sleeping on one’s right side is the best sleeping position since no pressure is being put on the heart. It also allows the ingested food to move freely from the stomach to the small intestine. It is useful in relieving back-pain. However, most people prefer to sleep on their back but in this position, it is important to use a low pillow in order to keep the neck in the same level as the body so that they do not experience a neck-ache. However this sleeping position is not suitable for people suffering from lung and heart diseases because of the pressure which the diaphragm places on the lungs and can cause breathing difficulties. It is also not suitable for people who suffer from back-pain. If one sleeps on one’s left side, it can help relieve back-pain but one needs to hold a Dutch-wife and place one’s leg on it to prevent the body from going numb. Sleeping on one’s stomach hampers one’s breathing and may cause a neck-ache, since one has to bend his head toward the back or to the side for a prolonged period. If one must use this sleeping position, one should place a pillow under one’s chest in order to prevent a neck-ache.”⁹

⁶ **Cunkama Sutta**, *Aṅguttaranikāya pañcakanipāta*, MCU, vol.22, no.29, p.41

⁷ *Vinayapitṭaka Mahāvibhaṅga*, MBU, vol.3, no.361, p.84-85, 121

⁸ **Jarā Sutta**, *Samyuttanikāya Mahāvalagga*, MBU, vol.31, no.962-963, p.62

⁹ Thairath (2550) online, **Which Sleeping Posture Is Safe and Helps to Sleep Soundly?** April 28, 2550

The balanced approach to good health is not new but has been practiced since the Lord Buddha's time over 2,500 years ago. Today, the medical professionals are paying increasing attention to this field especially Dr. Tavorn Kasamasan who has been studying this field for more than a decade and is considered an expert in the area. His findings will be presented in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Exercises

After you finish studying Chapter 3, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING ILLNESSES FROM THE STANDPOINT OF A HEALTHY BODY

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 4 UNDERSTANDING ILLNESSES FROM THE STANDPOINT OF A HEALTHY BODY

- 4.1 What Is a Healthy Body?
- 4.2 What Is an Illness?
- 4.3 Why Must We Learn What the Healthy Body Is?
- 4.4 How Does the Body Keep Itself Healthy?
- 4.5 The Skeleton
- 4.6 Illnesses Which Result from the Body's Loss of Balance

CONCEPTS

1. A healthy body is a body which is free from illnesses and is working properly.
2. An illness occurs when a part or different parts of the body do not function properly.
3. We must understand how the healthy body works so that we can keep it healthy and prevent it from becoming ill.
4. A healthy body is when every part of the body is working together harmoniously.
5. The body is made up of 206 different sized and shaped bones which are held together by muscles, tendons, and connective tissue. Movement of the different parts of the body is made possible by the working together of the muscles and tendons.
6. When the body loses its balance, this causes certain part(s) of the body to become dysfunctional and the body becomes ill.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to know the difference between a healthy body and a sick body.
2. To enable the student to learn about the healthy body and the way to maintain it.
3. To enable the student to know about the basic components of the body.
4. To enable the student to know that when the body is out of balance, it can become ill. Therefore, it is important to make sure that the body does not become unbalanced.

UNDERSTANDING ILLNESSES FROM THE STANDPOINT OF A HEALTHY BODY

4.1 What is a Healthy Body?

A healthy body is a body whose parts are working together harmoniously. Nature has given the body the mechanisms to grow, to develop, to change in such a way that it can be kept healthy for the duration of its life.

4.2 What Is an Illness?

An illness occurs when one or more parts of the body cannot function properly. The causes of an illness can come from within as well as outside the body.

External Causes: These include germs, eating habit (eating too much, eating too little, eating a poor diet, etc.), chemicals, toxic substances, bodily injury, pollution, etc. These external causes can make the body sick by affecting its cells and tissues or by interfering with its working mechanism.

Internal Causes: The body has been designed by nature to be adaptable when faced with a certain number of external factors. For examples, the body can go without food for several days; the Eskimos can survive on meat and fish alone. These facts show that the body is capable of adapting to external factors and has the coping mechanism to ensure its survival. Nonetheless, the working mechanism of the body can break down even without any external causes. When that happens, the body becomes ill.

It can be said that the body is healthy when its mechanism is working properly. A healthy body in turn keeps illnesses at bay.

4.3 Why Must We Learn What the Healthy Body Is?

- 1) **So that we can understand the mechanism by which the body keeps itself healthy**
For most of us, we often associate good health with the food we eat, the exercise we do, etc. In medical textbooks, the characteristics and functions of each organ are described in details and emphasis is placed on how an illness occurs. For example, arthritis is caused by the inflammation or deterioration of the joints. What is not mentioned is how the joints function in their normal, healthy state. Therefore, what needs to be increasingly emphasized is the knowledge about the working mechanism which makes the body healthy.
- 2) **So that we can use the knowledge gained to help us keep our body healthy**
When we understand the way our body works in its normal, healthy state, it will be easier for us to use preventive maintenance to make sure that our body keeps on working properly. And when we do get sick some time, we will then be able to recover faster.

4.4 How Does the Body Keep Itself Healthy?

The body is healthy when every part of the body works together harmoniously. The different cells which are the smallest units of the body must also work together harmoniously.

4.4.1 Health Factors

There are four main factors which help the body to function properly. These so-called health factors include:

1) Food, Water, and Oxygen

These are essential raw materials which the body transforms into energy in order to drive each cell and each organ to work properly. The amounts of food, water, and oxygen needed by the body vary in accordance with the circumstances.

2) Effective Waste-Elimination

When the body transforms raw materials into energy, waste is produced. These metabolic wastes must be effectively eliminated from the cells and tissues so that their working mechanism is not disrupted. If any of the waste material is not being eliminated properly or at all, it can cause the cell to die.

3) Continuous Cellular Communication

Signals that are transmitted among cells, tissues, organs, and systems must be able to continue at all times. It is not enough that each cell, etc., functions properly but everything must work together harmoniously. For example, when we bend a finger, it requires that certain muscle extends while another muscle flexes.

When any of these health factors is impaired, it can negatively impact the working mechanism of the body even though the symptoms may not show up immediately. It can be said that any problem involving these three health factors can cause the body to become ill.

4.4.2 The Working Mechanism of the Health Factors

1) **The Transport of Nutrients:** The arteries do the work of bringing food, water, and oxygen to all the cells in the body.

2) **The Transport of Waste:** The lymphatic system and veins do the work of eliminating body waste by carrying waste materials to the different organs whose function is to treat the waste materials.

3) **The Communication System:** This is carried out through two pathways which include:

3.1 The nervous system.

3.2 The hormonal system.

To function effectively, the nerves must receive adequate nutrients, water, and oxygen. They must also eliminate waste materials in a timely manner. Any part of the body that experiences poor blood and lymph circulation will cause the nerves in that part not to receive enough nutrients and oxygen. At the same time,

waste elimination will also be disrupted. These situations can cause the communication system to be impaired.

The body will be healthy when every cell in the body receives enough nutrients and oxygen, effectively eliminates waste materials, and communicates properly with each other.

4.4.3 The Roles of Muscles, Tendons, and Connective Tissue

Blood circulation, the lymphatic system, and communication via the nerves and hormones take place in the muscles, tendons (a strong band of tissue in the body that joins a muscle to a bone) and connective tissue.

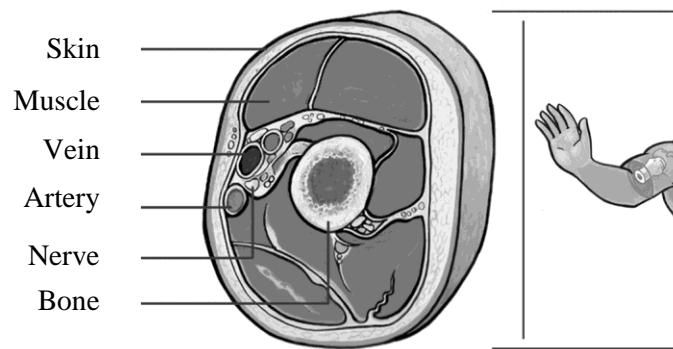


Figure 4-1 A Cross-Section of the Arm

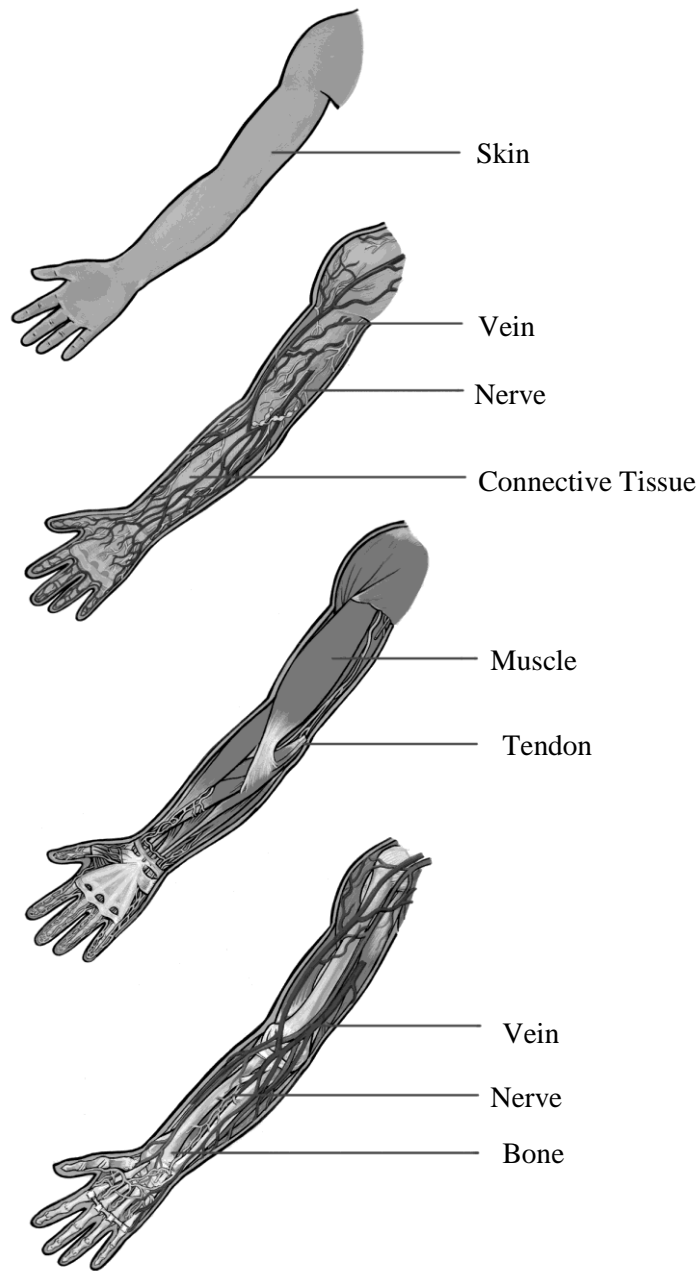


Figure 4-2 The Different Components of the Arm

What Is the Connective Tissue?

It is a tissue that connects, supports, or surrounds other tissues, organs, etc. A cross-section of muscle will show that every muscle is surrounded by the connective tissue. Every bone in the body large or small is also surrounded by the connective tissue.

In the absence of the connective tissue, the muscle cannot contract without collapsing because it has nothing to hold it together. A muscle can adhere to a bone because of the connective tissue. The connective tissue does the work of holding the muscle together.

The connective tissue is formed before the muscles, tendons, and bones; therefore, it can continue to grow around them. The connective tissue also does the work of holding in place the brain, the heart, the lungs, the intestines, etc. The connective tissue found around the muscles, tendons, and bones are sturdier and thicker than that which holds the internal organs in place.

4.4.4 A Balanced Body

Muscles, tendons, and the connective tissue give structure to the body. The three health factors must function properly in these systems in order for the body to maintain its balanced state.

4.5 The Skeleton

The skeleton is made up of 206 pieces of bones of various shapes and sizes. They are held together by muscles, tendons, and the connective tissue. Movement of the body is made possible by the muscles and tendons.

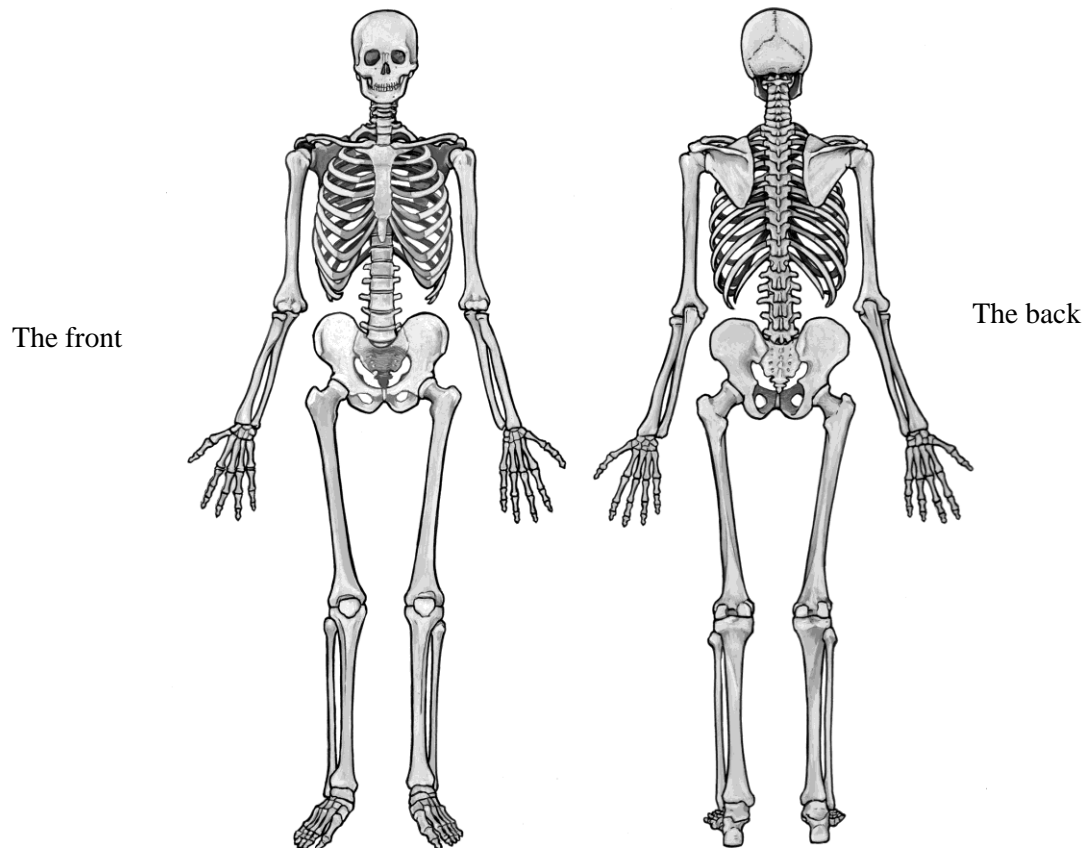


Figure 4-4 The Skeleton

The structure of the body is somewhat like that of a puppet. The main difference is that instead of strings, the different parts of the body and the joints are moved by the muscles and tendons. The connective tissue connects the bones together such that the structure of the body can be maintained. When muscles, bones, and the connective tissue function together properly, they help keep the structure of the body in a balanced state. In the same token, a balanced structure helps the muscles, bones, and the connective tissue to function properly.

Movement of the body occurs through the coordination of its different parts. We instinctively know not to overstretch or overstrain our muscles and tendons. When our body structure is in a balanced state, it can help keep the body healthy by enabling every organ and every system to function properly.

4.6 Illnesses Which Can Result from the Body's Loss of Balance

If we compare the body to a car, then the skeleton can be compared to the car's chassis; the muscles, tendons, and connective tissue can be compared to the car's body. If the chassis is askew, so will the car's body. When the car moves, the wheels will not be straight because the car's balance has been lost. In the same manner, if the structure of the body is not balanced, it cannot work properly and illnesses can result.

Whenever our body moves, our muscles, tendons, and connective tissue will need to either contract or relax. After they contract for a period, they will automatically relax and vice versa. During muscle contraction, circulation may be hindered but the body can still continue to work properly. However, if contraction is not followed by relaxation, circulation will be blocked and the body can no longer function properly. In the same way, our breathing has a natural rhythm, in and then out. When we hold our breath for a short while, there is enough oxygen remaining in the lungs to keep our body going normally. But if we hold our breath for too long and all the oxygen has been used up, our lungs will not be able to function properly.

If our body structure is out of balance, our muscles, tendons, and connective tissue will be under stress and strain all the time. This scenario can cause poor circulation of the blood and the lymphatic system. The poor circulation will in turn retard the transmission of the nerve signals. If this occurs for a long period, the affected organ will not be able to function properly.

Moreover, the stress and strain experienced by the muscles, tendons, and connective tissue can spread to other parts of the body. The reason is that the connective tissue connects every part of the body such that when one area is pulled; all the other areas of the body will be affected.

4.6.1 Examples of the Illnesses Which Result from the Body's Loss of Balance

As mentioned earlier, an illness can be a result of external factors such as germs, poisons, etc., and internal factors such as a dysfunctional organ. Internal factors are caused directly by the body's loss of balance which can cause different illnesses depending on which part of the nerves or arteries are affected.

Examples of the illnesses that result from the body's loss of balance include:

- 1) Aches and pains such as migraine headache, neck-pain, back-pain, muscle-pain, pain in the bone, pain in the joint, pain in the nerve, etc.
- 2) Illnesses that have to do with the eye, ear, nose, throat such as a dry throat, chronic eye irritation, light sensitivity, chronic sore-throat, hearing and balance problems, congestion, nasal drips, etc.
- 3) Illnesses which involve the bone, the joint, and the muscle such as joint-pain, joint deterioration, deterioration of the neck-bones or the spinal cord, problems which involve the inter-vertebral disc, weakened muscles, etc.

Other illnesses and symptoms include fatigue, dizziness, heart palpitation, low stamina, achiness, bloatedness in the stomach, depression, sleep problems, asthma, stomach problems, Parkinson's disease, etc.

4.6.2 Basic Knowledge about Illnesses

To gain an understanding about illnesses, there are a few things that we need to know first.

1) Basic Knowledge about Pain

Pain is triggered when the tissue is cut off from circulation and tissue injury is eminent. It may be inflamed or undergoing destruction; therefore, the nervous system sends out a warning signal in the form of pain.

2) Basic Knowledge about the Nervous System

The nervous system in the human body includes the brain, the spinal cord, and the spinal nerves. The brain and the spinal cord are the command center of the body and work by transmitting signals through the nerves. The spinal nerves branch off the spinal cord in pairs to the left and to the right sides of the body. The spinal nerves on the left side carry information to and from the left side of the body and the respective organs. Likewise, the spinal nerves on the right side carry information to and from the right side of the body and the respective organs.

Details of the Nervous System:

- 1) Cranial Nerves:** There are altogether 12 pairs of cranial nerves that operate the various parts and organs in the head and neck such as the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the larynx, the facial muscles, etc. However, there is one special pair which extends down to the organs in the chest and the abdomen.
- 2) Spinal Nerves:** There are altogether 31 pairs of spinal nerves which operate the various parts and organs starting from the base of the neck all the way to the tailbone.

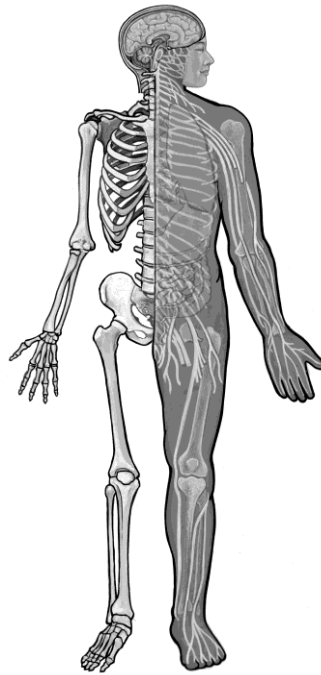


Figure 4-5 The Cranial Nerves and the Spinal Nerves

Each pair of nerves performs the following three functions:

- 1) Transmitting sensory signals from the different parts and organs to the central nervous system.
- 2) Transmitting signals from the mind to control the workings of the muscles in order to enable the different parts of the body to move and maintain balance.
- 3) Transmitting signals from the autonomic nervous system which controls the workings of blood circulation system, the respiratory system, the digestive system, etc. The autonomic nervous system also controls the different bodily functions during sleep.

The autonomic nervous system, which includes the Parasympathetic and the Sympathetic divisions, regulates the body's visceral organs via the innervations of three kinds of tissues: smooth muscle, cardiac muscle, and glands.

The regions of the body associated with the Parasympathetic division are in the cranial and sacral regions of the spinal cord (from the skull to the posterior wall of the pelvis). The Sympathetic division preganglionic neurons exit the spinal column between the first thoracic and second lumbar segments of the vertebrate column (from the back of the skull to the lower part of the back).

Sympathetic and Parasympathetic divisions typically function in opposition to each other. But this opposition is better understood as complementary in nature rather than antagonistic. For an analogy, one may think of the sympathetic division as the accelerator and the parasympathetic division as the brake. The Sympathetic division typically functions in actions requiring quick responses whereas the Parasympathetic division functions with actions that do not require immediate reaction. The main actions of the Parasympathetic nervous system are summarized by the phrase “rest and repose” or “rest and digest” in contrast to the “fight-or-flight” of the Sympathetic nervous system.

Here is a summary of some of the effects of Sympathetic and Parasympathetic stimulation which are generally in opposition to each other.

Structure

Sympathetic Stimulation

Parasympathetic Stimulation

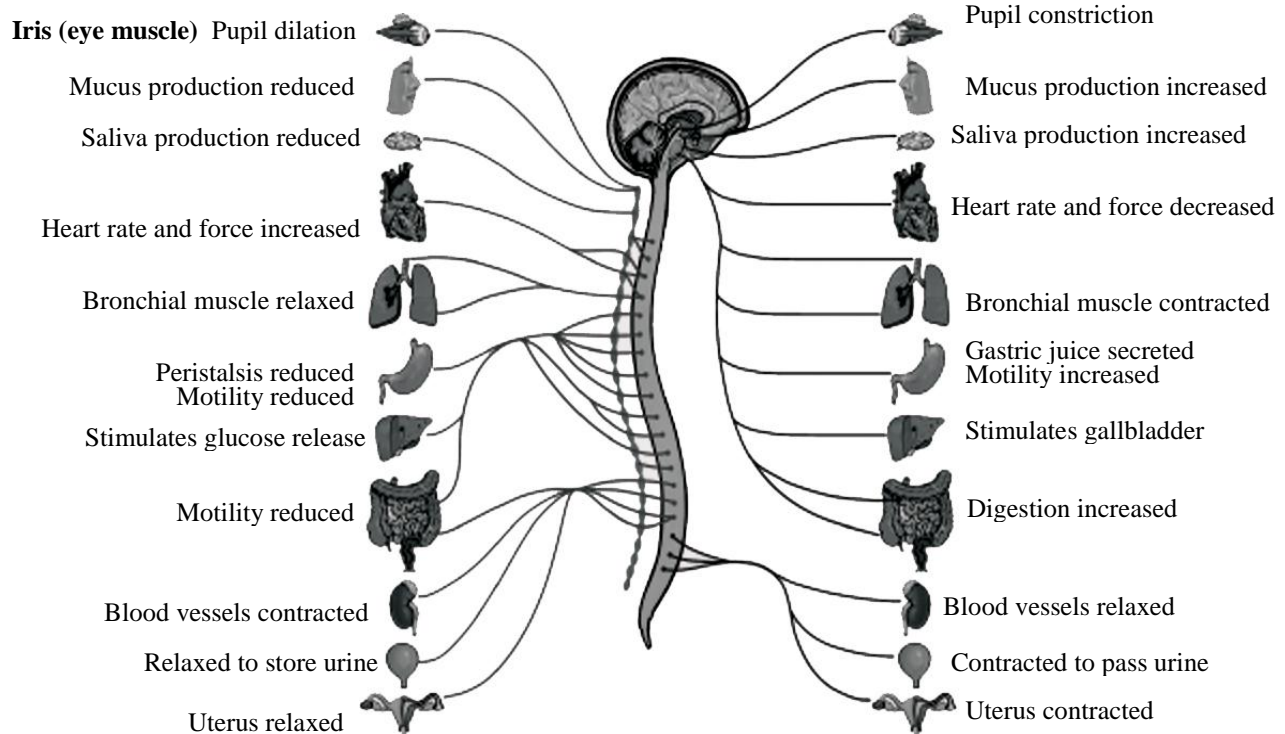


Figure 4-6 Structure

3) Basic Knowledge about the Spinal Column

The spinal column is one of the body's main supports and is divided into three sections: the cervical, the thoracic, and the lumbar spine. The spine is a very complex mechanical structure that is highly flexible yet strong and stable. It is surrounded by many tendons and muscles that help to maintain its stability. The spinal cord is the part of the body through which the brain transmits its signals to the remainder of the body. The primary functions of the spinal column include:

- To protect the spinal cord, nerve roots, and internal organs.
- To provide flexibility of motion.
- To provide structure support and balance for the upright posture. The spine bears the weight of the head, shoulders, arms, and upper body. The upper body weight is then distributed to the hips and legs. The spine attempts to keep the body's weight balanced evenly over the pelvis. This reduces the amount of work required by the spinal muscles and prevents muscle fatigue and back pain. Loss of balance can result in strain to the spinal muscles and deformity of the spine as it attempts to maintain the upright posture.

The spinal cord typically ends between the first and second lumbar vertebra and afterward exists only as nerve roots. Between each vertebra on either side the right and the left, at each disc level, a nerve exits the spinal cord. Each nerve is responsible for either the movement of a specific muscle or the sensation from the skin for a specific region.

Disease or injury can affect any or every part mentioned above. There may be disease or injury to the discs. Overgrowth (bone spurs) and pinching may affect the vertebra, the tendons, etc. The net result of any of these disease processes may result in an increased pressure on the nerves and spinal cord, an increased strain on the muscle, tendon, or joints, and manifest as pain, sensory disturbance, weakness, trouble walking, and/or bladder or bowel problems. Since the Sympathetic nervous system controls the muscles, the tendons, and the connective tissue along the entire length of the spinal column, it is more prone to disease or injury than the Parasympathetic nervous system.

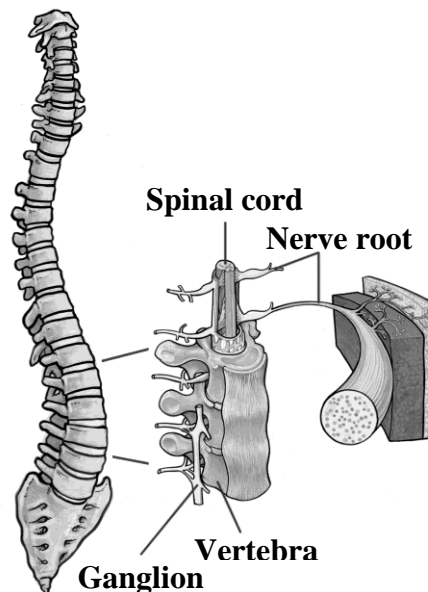


Figure 4-7 Nerve Roots Branching Off the Spinal Cord

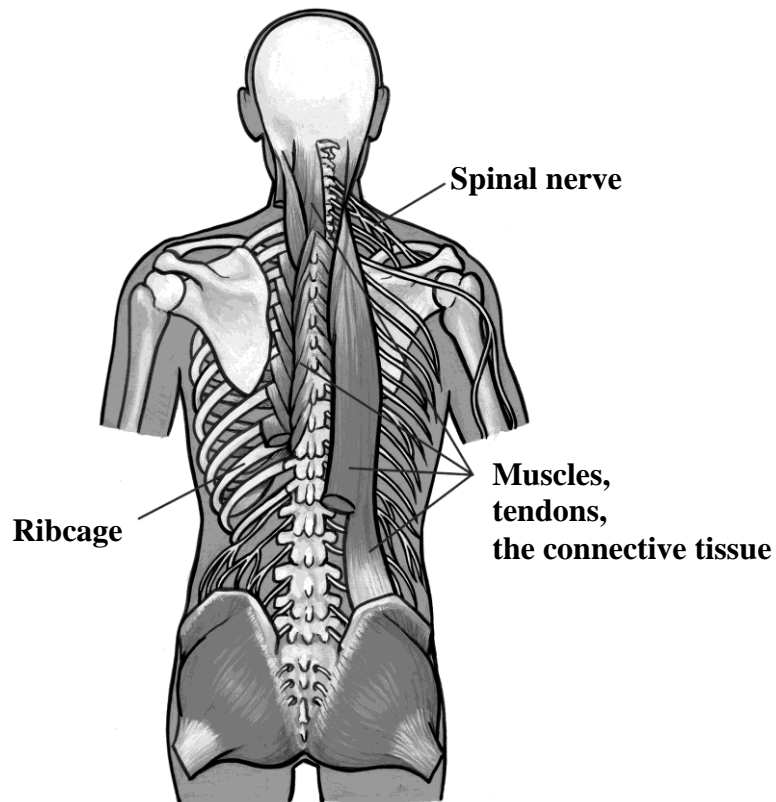


Figure 4-8 Spinal Nerves Controlling the Muscles, Tendons, Connective Tissue

Symptoms Which Are Indicative of the Body’s Loss of Balance

Some of the symptoms which are a result of the body’s loss of balance can show up as follows:

- 1) Deformity of the spine.
- 2) Strain in the spinal muscle.
- 3) Stress and strain in the muscle, tendon, and connective tissue.
- 4) Blockage of blood circulation in certain arteries and veins; blockage of the lymphatic system in certain lymphatic vessels and capillaries.
- 5) Impaired transmission of the nerve signals as a result of blockage.
- 6) Dysfunctional organ as a result of the impaired transmission of the nerve signals.
- 7) Symptoms which appear as a result of the dysfunctional organ.

4.6.3 Examples of the Illnesses Which Are Caused by the Spinal Loss of Balance:

1) Migraine Headaches

Some people, who experience migraine headaches on a regular basis, may believe that they are suffering from a brain tumor and will go to have it checked out only to find that there is no tumor in their brain. The main cause of migraine headaches is the loss of spinal balance in the area between the neck and the head. This loss of balance causes the muscles, tendons, and connective tissue around the base of the neck and the base of the skull to experience stress and strain. This causes

blockage of signal transmission from the central nervous system to the nerves in the affected area and the muscles tense up. The tense muscles in turn block circulation such that not enough blood is getting to the affected area. Poor blood circulation can also result in tissue damage.

2) Eyesight Problems

A person with normal eyesight can see things clearly both close-up and far away because the retina can receive the images produced by the cornea and the crystalline lens. The crystalline lens is a doubly convex, transparent, elastic body in the eye, situated behind the iris that focuses incident light on the retina. The crystalline lens is held in place by slender but very strong suspensory ligaments. The adjustment in lens shape to focus at different distances is carried out by the contraction and relaxation of the suspensory ligaments and the ciliary muscle around the inside of the eye. This adjustment is called the 'accommodative process'.

It has been found that most eyesight problems occur when the accommodative process does not work properly because the muscles around the back of the skull and the underlying tissue are so tense that blood circulation is blocked and transmission of nerve signals is impaired.

3) Earache, Ringing in the Ears

Some people go to see a physician with an earache or a complaint involving a ringing in the ears only to find that there is nothing physically wrong with them. But when they press behind the ear, it feels very painful. This is because the muscles in that area are very tense and they exert pressure on the air-vent which lies between the middle ear and the throat and cause air to be trapped inside. The trapped air subsequently causes an earache or a ringing in the ears.

4) Dizzy Spells

Dizziness is said to be caused by the loss of equilibrium in the inner ear fluids but more often than not it is caused by very tense muscles in the neck area. The tense muscles in turn block the circulation of blood in the organs of which function is to maintain the body's balance and their function is impaired.

5) Allergies

People suffering from respiratory allergies tend to have a runny nose because the autonomic Sympathetic division, which controls mucus secretion through the neck and the back of the skull, has been blocked and its function is impaired. The results of which are allergies and a runny nose.

6) Asthma

Cold air and allergens such as dust, smoke, pollens, etc., can cause the patient's chest to feel tight and he experiences breathing difficulties which are accompanied by a whizzing sound. He also coughs frequently and sticky phlegm is produced. Such are the symptoms of asthma.

Under normal circumstances when a foreign body enters the windpipe, the Sympathetic division will transmit signals for the windpipe to contract and mucus to be secreted in order to trap the foreign body and the clearing process will ensue. When the situation returns to normal the Sympathetic division will transmit signals for the windpipe to relax.

However whenever the Sympathetic division is blocked by tense spinal muscles, once the windpipe contracts, it remains that way and difficulties in breathing result. Moreover, since mucus is continued to be secreted, the body must then try to remove excess mucus by continuous coughing.

7) Stomach Ulcers

Under normal circumstances when ingested food reaches the stomach, the Parasympathetic division will order gastric juice to be secreted so that food digestion in the stomach can begin. At the same time motility in the stomach allows the food and gastric juice in the stomach to mix and the digested food to be moved to the small intestine. At this point, the Sympathetic division will work to decrease the production of gastric juice and the motility of the stomach.

However, tense spinal muscles can impair the workings of the Sympathetic division and the production of gastric juice is not shut off. Excess gastric juice can damage the stomach lining and result in a stomach ulcer. Excess gastric juice can also cause heartburn and belching. When motility in the stomach occurs without the regular periods of relaxation, painful indigestion can also be experienced.

8) Arthritis

Under normal circumstances, the joints experience no pain because the muscles, tendons, and connective tissue which support and control the movement of the joint work together harmoniously. However, if certain muscles do not receive proper signals, stress and strain can occur with the result that joints and tissue can become painful. Chronic blockage of signals can result in joint inflammation and deterioration.

It has been found that impaired transmission of nerve signals is caused by tense spinal muscles and connective tissues. If the situation is not taken care of, the affected muscles can become weakened eventually.

Normally when we suffer from a painful joint, we tend to look at the problem joint or at most at the surrounding muscles. We may try to exercise the muscles but if the signals from the brain are not getting through, the problem will not be solved. To keep all the muscles in good working order, it is necessary that all four health factors are present (as mentioned in 4.4.1).

9) A Curved Back, an Arched Back, a Back Arched to One Side

The cause of these back problems is the same as that of painful joints and it involves tense muscles, tendons, and connective tissue.



A curved back



An arched back

Figure 4-9 Back Problems

A curved back is caused by the tense muscles, tendons, and connective tissue at the front of the body whereas an arched back is caused by the tense muscles, ligaments, and connective tissue at the back. A back arched to one side is caused by the tense muscles, tendons, and connective tissue on the left or the right side of the body.

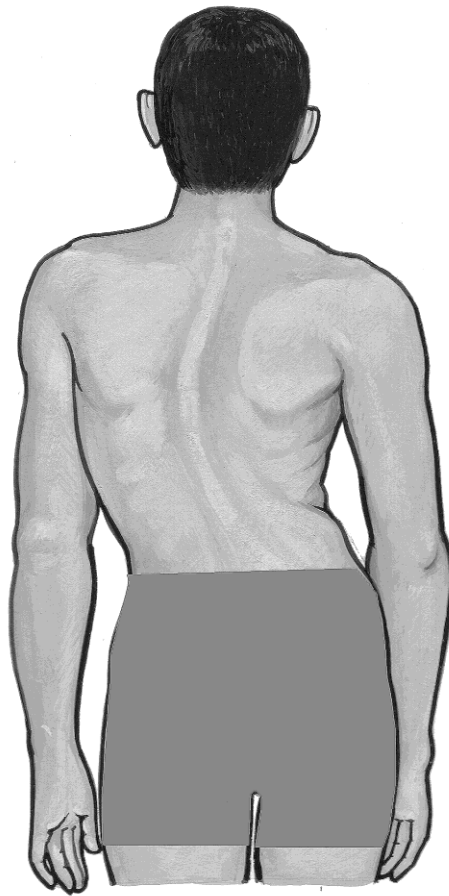


Figure 4-10 A Back Arched to One Side

Under normal circumstances, the muscles, tendons, and connective tissue will contract and then relax but when relaxation does not occur, the body's balance is lost and different organs and systems can be affected.

4.6.4 What Causes the Body to Lose Its Balance?

The body can lose its balance as a result of the following three reasons:

- 1) External Reasons:** Accidents such as a bad fall can negatively affect the body by causing it to suffer stress and strain in the relevant muscles, tendons, and connective tissue. At the same time, blood circulation and the transmission of nerve signals in the affected area can be disrupted. Unnatural childbirth as in the case of caesarian section or in the case where forceps are used on the newborn, the stress and strain can be felt by both the mother and the newborn.

- 2) Internal Reasons:** Poor postures can cause the body to lose its balance because they put stress and strain on the relevant muscles, tendons, and connective tissue as well as interfering with blood circulation and the transmission of nerve signals.

- 3) **A Combination of External and Internal Reasons:** What usually happens is that when the body loses its balance as a result of an external reason and corrective measures are not taken, the situation can be exacerbated because it will cause the person to compensate for the problem by adopting a poor posture. For example, a person's certain muscles, tendons, and connective tissue at the front may undergo stress and strain due to an accident. This makes the person experience aches and pains when he sits up straight. Therefore, to alleviate the aches and pains, he has to adopt a poor posture by sitting with his back slightly bent because it is the posture which allows the muscles at the front and the back to be in balance. This sense of balance comes from the brain but the brain has no idea how the muscles at the front are being pulled while the muscles at the back are being stretched. Since muscles, tendons, and connective tissue hold the bones in place, their unbalanced state can also pull the relevant bones out of balance.

Therefore, it is up to us to make sure that our muscles, tendons, and connective tissue are balanced and in good working order at all times. This way we can avoid unnecessary aches and pains.

Exercises

After the student finishes studying Chapter 4, complete the test and exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE BALANCED APPROACH TO GOOD HEALTH IN THE PRESENT DAYS (1)

**TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 5
THE BALANCED APPROACH TO GOOD HEALTH IN THE PRESENT
DAYS (1)**

- 5.1 What Is the Balanced Approach?
- 5.2 The Balanced Posture
- 5.3 Using a Series of Exercises to Adjust the Body Structure

CONCEPTS

1. The balanced approach is the way to maintain health as well as treat illnesses through the adjustment of the body structure.
2. Keeping a balanced posture means that whatever posture we assume whether we are sitting, lying down, standing, walking, working, etc., we always make sure that our spinal column is in the correct alignment.
3. Perform physical exercises in order to adjust our body structure and keep it balanced.

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable the student to learn about the balanced approach and what it entails.
2. To enable the student to learn to keep a balanced posture.
3. To enable the student to know how to adjust the body structure through the correct performance of a series of exercise.

THE BALANCED APPROACH TO GOOD HEALTH IN THE PRESENT DAYS (1)

Whatever posture our body assumes be it sitting, standing, lying down, walking, etc., our body structure should be kept in the correct alignment which means that our muscles, tendons, and connective tissue should be in a naturally relaxed state. This way every organ in the body can function properly.

It was mentioned in Chapter 4 that poor postures are the main cause of our illnesses. Poor postures in turn put stress and strain on our muscles, tendons, and connective tissue. When this happens it interferes with or disrupts the transmission of nerve signals and blood circulation in the affected area. The severity of the resulting illness depends on the duration and the frequency of the problem.

5.1 What Is the Balanced Approach?

The balanced approach is the way to keep the body healthy by keeping the body structure in the correct alignment and to treat illnesses when they occur by restoring the correct alignment of the body structure. The balanced approach is a novel approach in the treatment and preventive maintenance of the body and its development is based on detailed knowledge in the areas of anatomy and physiology.

In this approach, whenever the body becomes ill, treatment involves the use of physical exercises that is a natural process and is compatible with the body structure. Drugs or chemicals are not used.

Practices Involved in the Balanced Approach:

The approach emphasizes keeping the body structure balanced such that all the muscles, tendons, and connective tissue can contract and relax naturally. There are four components to this approach as follows:

1. Keep a balanced posture at all times.
2. Keep the body structure balanced.
3. Perform a series of physical exercises that enhance the body's balance.
4. Keep the muscles and tendons relaxed in order to enhance blood circulation.

The balanced approach will help our body to work properly and keep us in good health all throughout our life.

5.2 The Balanced Posture

Keeping a balanced posture means sitting, lying down, standing, walking, running, working or carrying out any activity by keeping the spinal column properly aligned and extended.

We want to keep our spinal column aligned by extending it rather than by bending it because bending any part of the body can obstruct the circulation of blood, the working of the lymphatic system, and the transmission of nerve signals. Since our body is subject to the force of gravity at all times, this has a negative effect on our spinal column. Therefore, we need to resist the force of gravity by keeping our spinal column aligned and extended at all times in order to keep our body structure balanced.

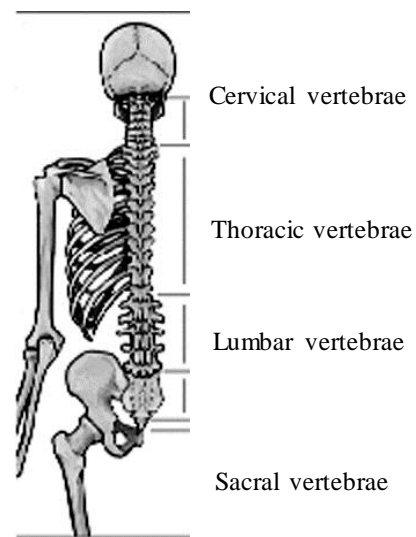


Figure 5-1 Structure of the Spinal Column

The Spinal Column: It consists of three regions as follows:

- 1) The upper region: It consists of 7 cervical vertebrae.
- 2) The middle region: It consists of 12 thoracic vertebrae.
- 3) The lower region: It consists of 5 lumbar vertebrae and the sacral vertebrae.

The Balanced Posture

These are the postures which keep each region of the spinal column extended and in alignment and they can be described as follows:

1. Sit by extending your upper body upward and tightening your stomach muscles (Figure 5-2). Now breathe deeply and slowly. This posture enhances the alignment of the lower region of the spinal column from the sacral vertebrae to the lowest thoracic vertebra. The reason is that the lower vertebrae are controlled by the muscles in the back and the abdomen. As you inhale slowly and deeply without making any hissing sound until the abdomen, the chest, the ribs, and the lungs expand fully. Exhale slowly and deeply. This exercise will help the spinal column to be in correct alignment.



Figure 5-2

2. Sit by extending your upper body upward and pulling your shoulder blades (Scapula) close together toward the back (Figure 5-3). Do not raise your shoulders as you do this exercise. Relax your arms by resting them naturally at your side. This posture will keep the middle region of the spinal column upright.



Figure 5-3

3. Sit by extending your upper body upward and pulling your chin toward your throat while keeping your face parallel to the body. This posture helps the neck muscles to extend the upper part of the spinal column from the base of the skull to the shoulders (Figure 5-4) and keep them in alignment.



Figure 5-4

These postures are put together to form the basic posture which should be kept at all times. Make it a habit to remind yourself to tighten your stomach muscles, pull your shoulder blades close together, and tuck your chin under.

Initially we may feel that the basic posture seems unnatural to us but it is important that we keep practicing until it feels natural. We have assumed poor postures for so long that we mistake them for being natural and correct.

To maintain the basic posture does not mean that we have to look like a dummy. For example, when we have to pick up something from the floor, we should lower our body by bending our knees instead of our back. Once we pick the object up, we should straighten our body. When we look at something, we should do so without craning our neck or extending our chin. Once we practice the basic posture regularly, it will eventually feel natural to us and we will be on our way to a balanced body.

The Different Postures in Our Daily Life

1. Our Meditation Posture

We should begin our meditation posture with the basic posture. We then rest our hands on our lap with our arms close to our body. If our arms are too short, we should rest them on light cushion placed above our lap. This way we will prevent our shoulders from drooping.



Figure 5-5 The Correct Meditation Posture



Figure 5-6 The Incorrect Meditation Posture

2. When We Sit on the Floor with Our Legs Folded to One Side

We should keep our toes to our side as we maintain our basic posture.



Figure 5-7 The Correct Posture



Figure 5-8 The Incorrect Posture

3. The Male Celestial Being's Posture

The back and neck are upright and extended while we maintain our basic posture.



Figure 5-9 The Correct Posture



Figure 5-10 The Incorrect Posture

4. When We Sit on a Chair

- 4.1 When we sit without resting our back against the backrest, we should place our bottom near the edge of the chair. **Place our feet squarely on the floor.** Let our feet and our bottom bear our weight. Maintain our basic posture and we should look as though we are about ready to stand up.

- 4.2 When we want to rest our back against the backrest, sit with our bottom close to the back of the chair and lean all the way back. We should choose a chair which has a full and straight back to ensure that our spinal column is aligned while we are sitting down.

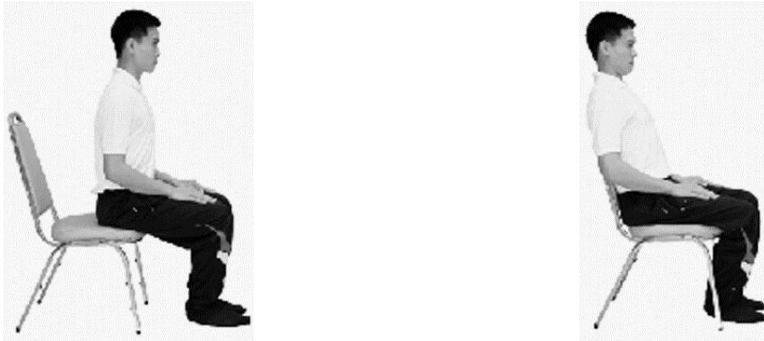


Figure 5-11 The Correct Postures



Figure 5-12 The Incorrect Postures

4. When We Sit Reading at Our Desk

Sit correctly as mentioned in 4.1 and 4.2. Adjust the angle of the book or the body such that we can see the words without bending our back or craning our neck.



Figure 5-13 The Correct Postures



Figure 5-14 The Incorrect Postures

6. When We Drive

When we drive, we should sit with our back flush against the backrest. Adjust the seat so that we can press fully on the accelerator and the brake pedal while our knees are slightly bent. Place the hands on the wheel at the 9 and 3 o'clock positions. Keep the elbows bent in a comfortable position. The backrest should be so adjusted that the back can rest against it completely.



Figure 5-15 The Correct Postures



Figure 5-16 The Incorrect Postures

Seats in most automobiles these days have been designed to curve around the driver's body for safety's sake. However, such a seat design causes the driver to have to sit with his back curved, his shoulders drooped, and his chest pressed together. This posture can cause the body structure to lose its balance. An easy way to correct this is to roll up a medium-sized towel and placed it in the middle of the seat. This way, the driver can sit with his back straight and his chest thrust forward.



Figure 5-17 Place a Rolled-Up Towel in the Middle of the Seat



Figure 5-18 Picture Showing a Driver Seated with His Back against the Rolled-Up Towel

7. Standing, Walking, and Running

When we stand, we should do so with our weight balanced equally on both our feet with our back and neck upright in accordance with the basic posture. This applies when we walk and run as well.

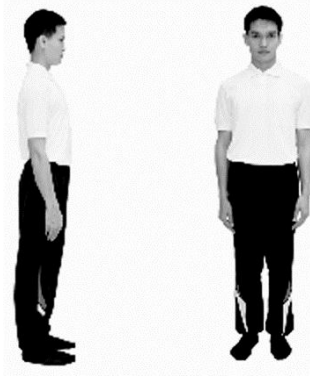


Figure 5-19
The Correct Posture When Standing

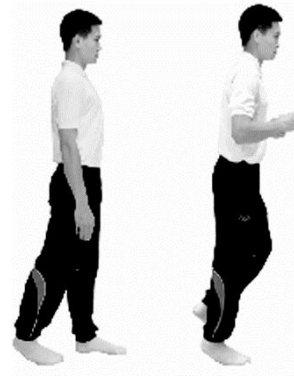


Figure 5-20
The Correct Postures When Walking and Running

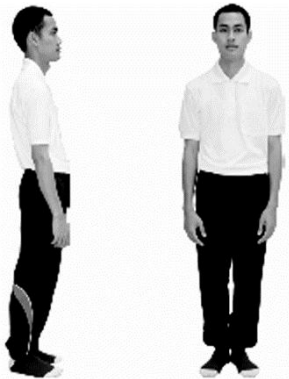


Figure 5-21
The Incorrect Posture When Standing



Figure 5-22
The Incorrect Posture When Walking and Running

8. Lifting Things Up from the Floor

We should plant our feet apart at approximately our shoulders' width with one foot in front of another. We should then lower our body and place our back knee on the floor such that our front foot, our back knee, and our back foot form a triangle. Straighten the back and hold the object to be lifted by making sure that its weight lies within or near the base of the triangle as much as possible. Lift the object by straightening the knees, the ankles, and the hips. Take care to keep the back straight. To put an object down on the floor, reverse the order of the action.



Figure 5-23 Getting Ready to Lift an Object Up from the Floor



Figure 5-24 The Correct Posture When Lifting an Object Up from the Floor



Figure 5-25 The Incorrect Posture When Lifting an Object Up from the Floor

9. The Correct Sleeping Position

It is best to lie flat on the bed so that the spinal column, the body, the neck will not be out of alignment and so that no pressure is being placed on the different organs. The arms should be placed at the side against or near the body. The hands can be placed on the abdomen or the chest.

Use a firm mattress such as one which is filled with kapok or coconut fiber. Use a soft pillow which allows the head and neck to rest on it. It should not be so high as to cause the face to bend toward the chest or so low as to cause the face to be upturned. The head and neck should be straight and in alignment. A pillow can be placed below the knees to help relieve the pressure placed on them by the legs, the abdomen, and the back.

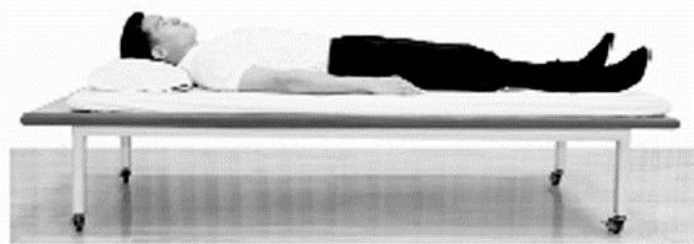


Figure 5-26 The Correct Sleeping Position

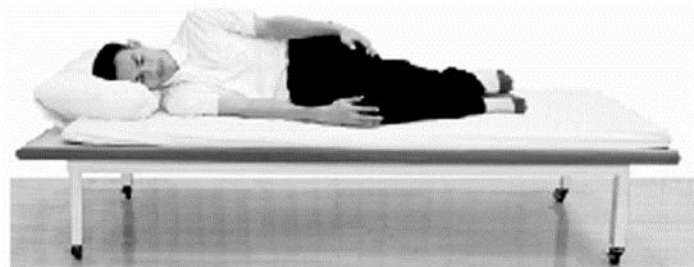
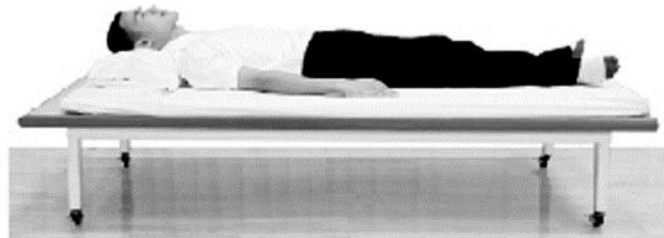
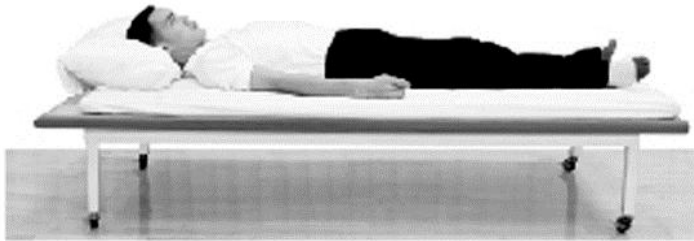


Figure 5-27 The Incorrect Sleeping Positions

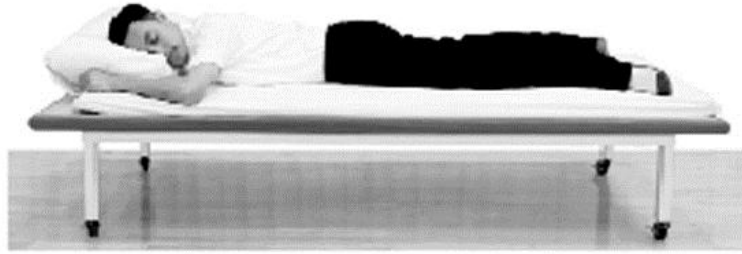


Figure 5-27 The Incorrect Sleeping Positions

If it is not possible to avoid a very soft mattress which may cause the spine to curve, a bath towel can be rolled up as shown in Figure 5-28 and used to support the back while lying down on the soft mattress. The rolled-up towel should be able to support the spinal column from the upper back to the waist. The flat part should support the waist. If the rolled-up towel is placed beneath the sheet, it has a better chance of staying in place.

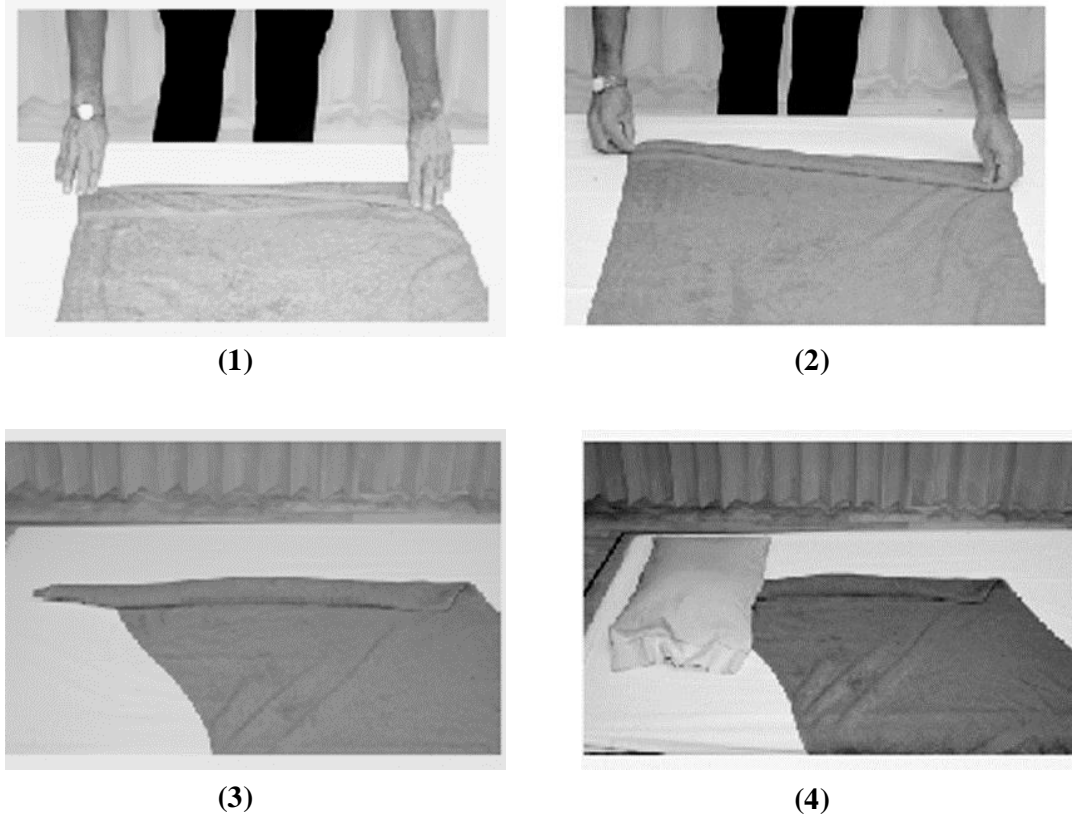


Figure 5-28 How to Roll Up a Bath Towel and Use It to Support the Back

It is important to keep our body structure balanced at all times because the balanced body structure is instrumental to our good health.

5.3 Using a Series of Exercises to Adjust the Body Structure

We perform physical exercises in order to keep our body structure balanced. Since our body structure is made up of interconnected muscles and we are constantly moving different parts of our body even when we are asleep; therefore, it is very likely that our movements can at times upset the balance of our body's structure. This is the reason that keeping the basic posture at all times is crucially important in maintaining the balance of our body structure.

Why Must We Exercise?

Actually, when we inhale and exhale correctly, when we keep our basic posture at all times, we are already performing physical exercises albeit at a very light level. By themselves, they are not enough to help the body maintain its balanced state; therefore, physical exercise is needed in order to condition our muscles such that they can keep our body structure balanced all the time.

During sleep, we can already put our body structure out of balance because we may unknowingly adopt poor sleeping positions. Therefore, after we get up in the morning, we should exercise once in order to adjust our body structure.

How Should We Exercise?

The objective of physical exercise is to adjust our body structure in such a way that it can return to its balanced state. The following exercises have been recommended by Dr. Tavorn Kasomsan¹. These exercises can be carried out anywhere but we must be sure to wear loose clothing in order to allow free movements.

5.3.1 Sitting Exercises

1) Getting Ready

Sit on a chair or a bench which is stable and well-balanced. The height should not be above your knees. Sit close to the edge of the seat. With each arm close to the side, place the hand with the palm up on the thigh. Place the feet squarely on the floor and parallel to each other with the thighs perpendicular to the floor. The feet and knees are placed shoulder-width apart in order to fully stretch the muscles at the front of the body all the way to the spinal column.

Keep the basic posture at all times (Section 5.2). Now breathe in as slowly and as deeply as possible such that the chest is thrust forward and upward. Tighten the stomach muscles while keeping the shoulder blades close together and the chin tucked under. Tighten the anal muscle. Now breathe out slowly and relax every part of the body. Be sure to swallow.

¹ Dr. Tavorn Kamomsan has developed these exercises which were first introduced by the associate professor Dr. Ladawan Suvankitti.

2) The First Exercise

Step 1: Get into the ready position as described above.

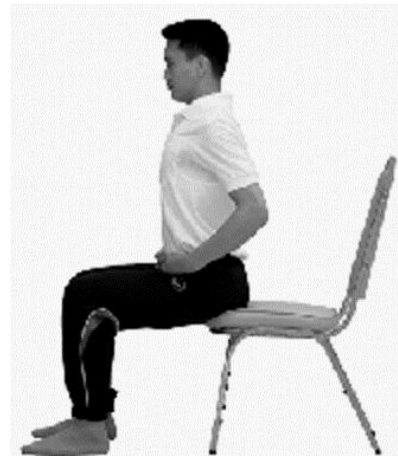


Figure 5-29 The Ready Position

Step 2: Stretch the upper body upward and lean forward by flattening your hips. Use the index finger and thumb to hold the kneecap by placing the index finger parallel to the space below the kneecap and the thumb parallel on the top edge of the kneecap. Stretch the rest of the fingers out such that the small finger goes around the back of the knee.

Extend your back upward as you lean forward and thrust the chest forward. Pull both shoulders toward the back such that the shoulder blades are close to the center of the back. Tuck the chin under while keeping the throat and the back in alignment.

Breathe in as slowly and as deeply as possible as you maintain your posture. Allow the chest to expand outward and upward. Tighten the stomach muscles. Keep the shoulder blades close together. Tuck the chin under so that your face is parallel to the body. Tighten the anal muscle. If done correctly, you should feel the muscles of your back and your neck being pulled upward.



Figure 5-30 The First Exercise



Figure 5-31

Breathe out slowly and relax every part of the body. Do not forget to swallow. The exercise should be repeated five times. It does not have to be carried out in a consecutive order but every time it is done, it should be done as correctly as possible. Begin the exercise each time with the ready position.

(3) The Second Exercise

Step 1: Begin with the ready position

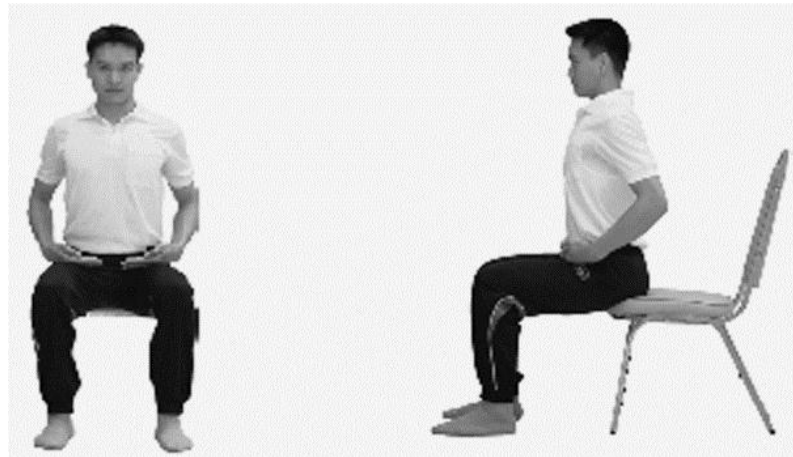


Figure 5-32 The Ready Position

Step 2: Join the hands together as shown in Figure 5-33



Figure 5-33 Joining the Hands Together, Step 2

Step 3: Turn the joined hands inside out and extend the arms all the way out. Keep the elbows straight and the joined fingers fully stretched.

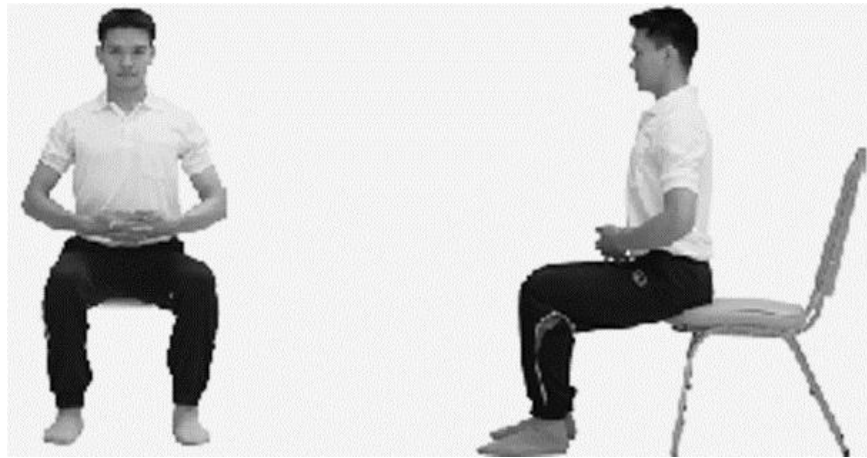


Figure 5-34 The Second Exercise, Step 3

Step 4: Pull the arms upward above the head

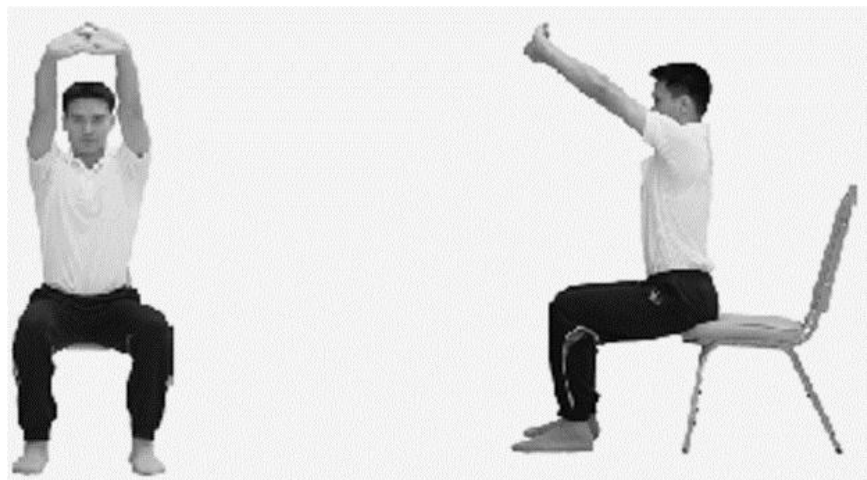


Figure 5-35 The Second Exercise, Step 4

Step 5: Pull the arms all the way up until they are close to the ears. Breathe in slowly and deeply. Tighten the stomach muscles. Tuck the chin under. Tighten the anal muscle.



Figure 5-36 The Second Exercise, Step 5

Step 6: Breathe out slowly and at the same time lower the arms as shown in Figure 5-37



Figure 5-37 The Second Exercise, Step 6

Step 7: Rest the joined hands on the top of the head above the spinal column. Relax as you keep the ready position and swallow.



Figure 5-38 The Second Exercise, Step 7

Step 8: Breathe in slowly and deeply until the chest expands outward and upward. Tighten the stomach muscles. Keep the shoulder blades close together. Tuck the chin under and tighten the anal muscle.

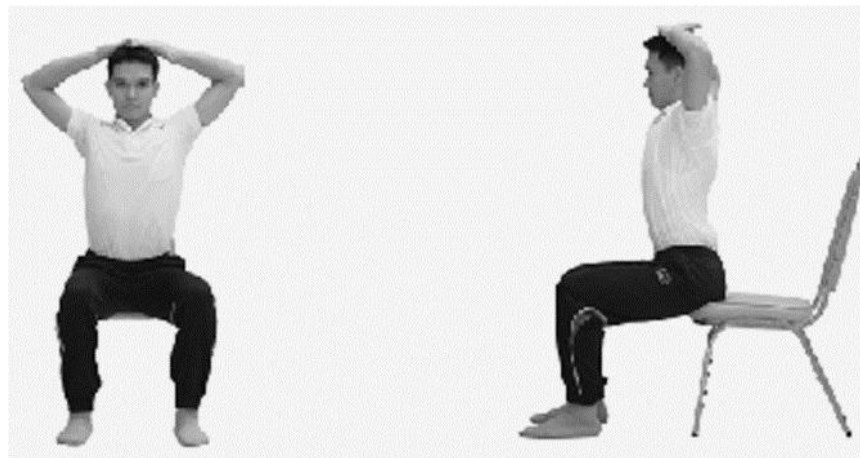


Figure 5-39 The Second Exercise, Step 8

Breathe out slowly and gradually relax the body while maintaining the ready position and swallow. Repeat this exercise 5 times beginning with steps 6 by extending the joined hands all the way above the head until the forearms are close to the ears. Breathe in deeply.



Figure 5-40 The Second Exercise, Step 6 (Repeating)

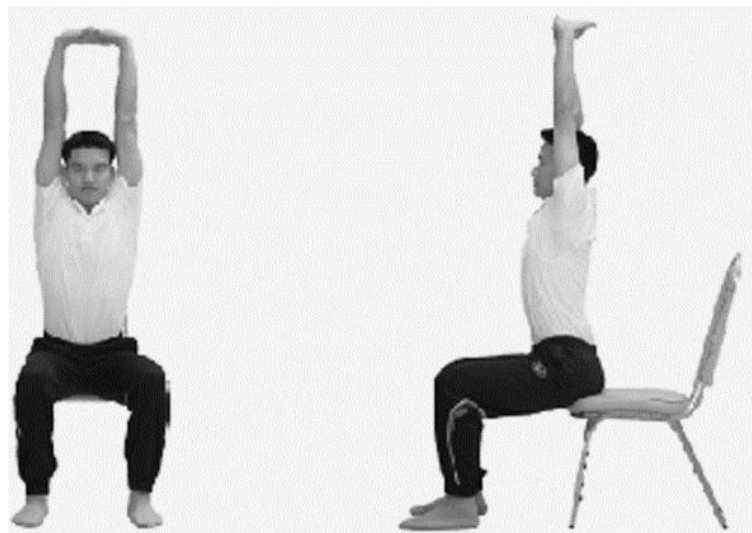


Figure 5-41 The Second Exercise, Step 5 (Repeating)

To End the Second Exercise:

Having repeated the exercise 5 times, return to step 8 by breathing in slowly, the joined hands resting on the head with the palms up as in the ready position. Breathe in deeply until the chest fully expands.



Figure 5-42 Getting Ready to End the Second Exercise

Step 9: Un-join the hands while breathing out slowly. Be sure to keep the shoulder blades close together at all times.

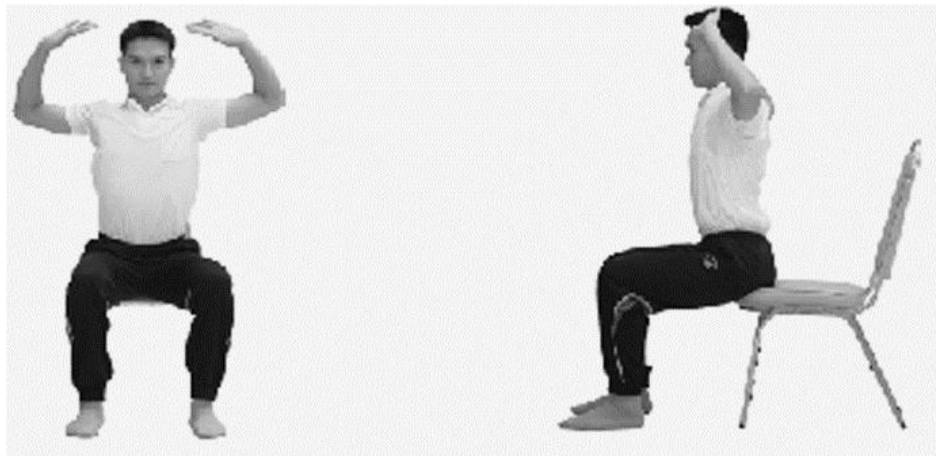


Figure 5-43 The Second Exercise, Step 9

Step 10: Bring your arms down to the sides and rest your hands palms down on your thighs as shown in Figure 5-44. Relax and swallow.



Figure 5-44 The Second Exercise, Step 10

4) The Third Exercise

Step 1: Begin with step 10 in the last exercise as shown in Figure 5-45



Figure 5-45 The Third Exercise, Step 1

Step 2: Stretch the left arm out. Keep the elbow straight as you bend your hand upward at the wrist

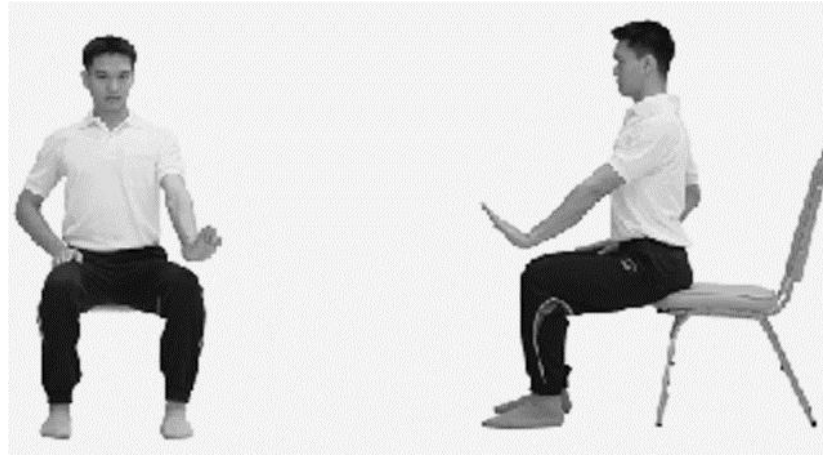


Figure 5-46 The Third Exercise, Step 2

Step 3: Breathe in slowly and deeply while you lift your arm up to the shoulder level and your fingers are perpendicular to the arm. Maintain the basic posture.



Figure 5-47 The Third Exercise, Step 3

Step 4: Breathe out slowly while you use your right hand to hold your left index finger, your left middle finger, and your left ring finger.

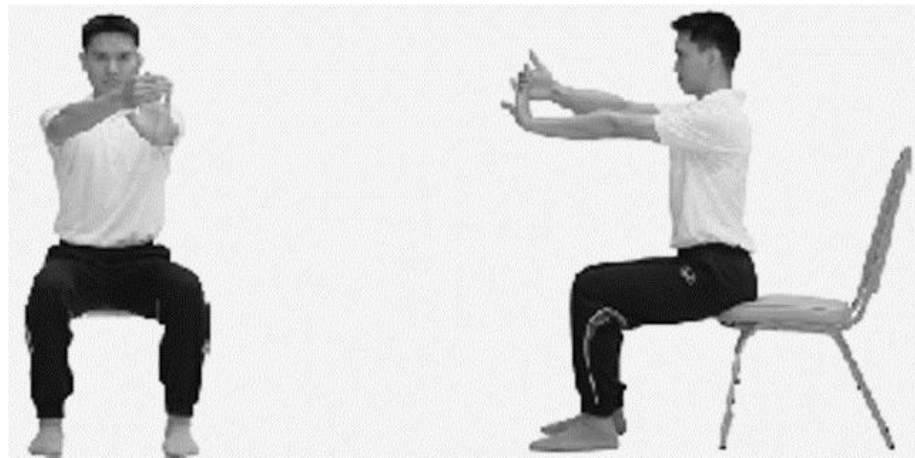


Figure 5-48 The Third Exercise, Step 4

Step 5: Inhale slowly and deeply and use your right hand to bend your left index, middle, and ring fingers toward your body as much as possible. The left arm remains straight. Inhale until the chest expands outward and upward. Tighten your stomach muscles. Tuck your chin in. Look straight ahead. Keep your shoulder blades close together. Tighten your anal muscle.

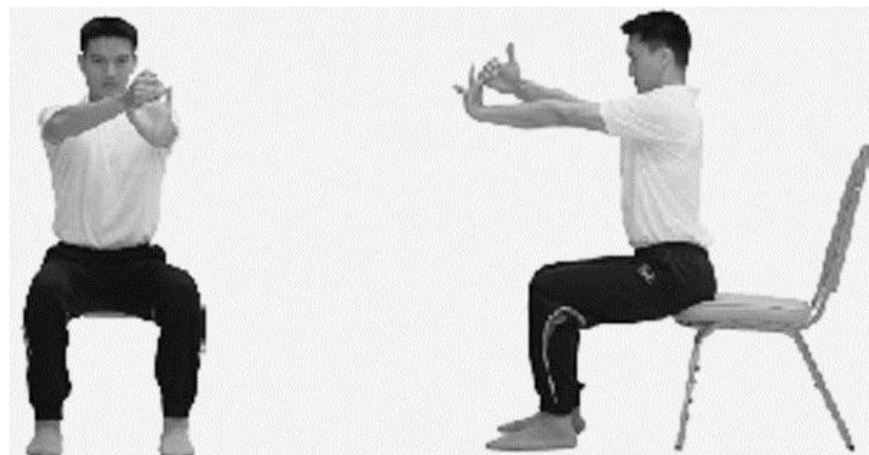


Figure 5-49 The Third Exercise, Step 5

Step 6: Inhale slowly and relax. The left arm is still fully extended. Put the right arm down and swallow.



Figure 5-50 The Third Exercise, Step 6

Step 7: Spread the fingers of your left arm as far apart as possible while maintaining the basic posture.



Figure 5-51 The Third Exercise, Step 7

Step 8: Inhale slowly and deeply as you keep your fingers fully apart. Turn the hand downward at the wrist.



Figure 5-52 The Third Exercise, Step 8

Step 9: Lift the fingers one by one from the ring finger, the middle finger, to the index finger.

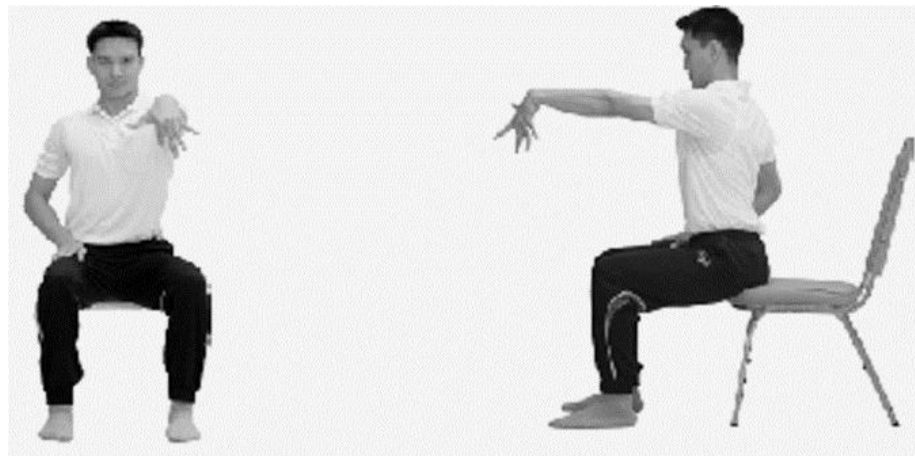


Figure 5-53 The Third Exercise, Step 9

Step 10: Exhale slowly and relax. Lower your left arm and put your hands palms down on your thighs. Swallow.



Figure 5-54 The Third Exercise, Step 10

Repeat the exercise for your right arm. Repeat the exercise for each arm three times.

5) The Fourth Exercise

Step 1: Begin the exercise with the ready position



Figure 5-55 The Fourth Exercise, the Ready Position

Step 2: Maintain the basic posture by extending your upper body upward and slightly forward. Anchor your upper body by holding on to the side of the chair at the point just behind your hip. Now pull your shoulder blades as close together as possible while keeping your upper body upward and slightly forward.



Figure 5-56 The Fourth Exercise, Step 2

Step 3: Inhale slowly and deeply until your chest expands outward and upward. Tighten your stomach muscles. Keep your shoulder blades close together. Tuck your chin in and tighten your anal muscle.

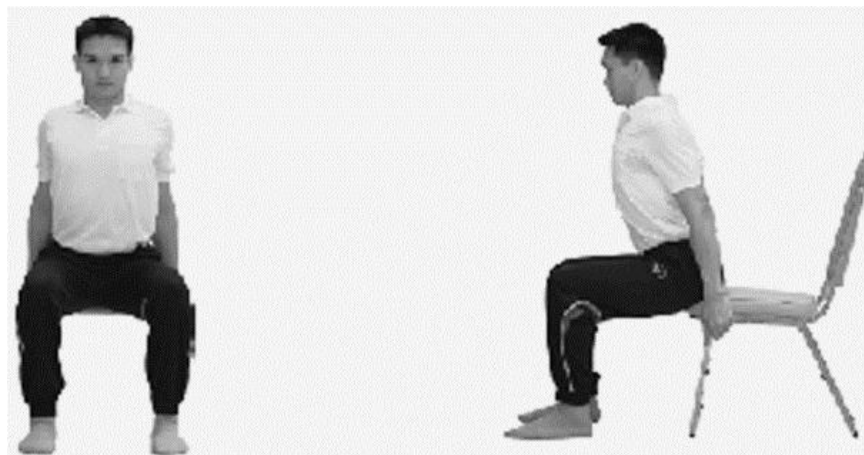


Figure 5-57 The Fourth Exercise, Step 3

Step 4: Exhale slowly and extend your left leg forward. Keep your knee straight. Lift your heel slightly off the floor and swallow.



Figure 5-58 The Fourth Exercise, Step 4

Step 5: Inhale slowly and deeply and bend your foot toward your body as much as possible while you maintain the basic posture.



Figure 5-59 The Fourth Exercise, Step 5

Step 6: Exhale slowly, relax and swallow. The foot is still off the floor, the knee is still straight.



Figure 5-60 The Fourth Exercise, Step 6

Step 7: Inhale slowly and deeply while you point your foot fully forward.



Figure 5-61 The Fourth Exercise, Step 7

Step 8: Exhale slowly, relax and swallow. The foot is still off the floor and pointing upward.



Figure 5-62 The Fourth Exercise, Step 8

Step 9: Inhale slowly and deeply. Flex your ankle and move your foot as far as possible from one side to another while maintaining the basic posture.



Figure 5-63 The Fourth Exercise, Step 9

Step 10: Exhale slowly, relax, and swallow while your foot is still slightly off the floor and pointing upward.



Figure 5-64 The Fourth Exercise, Step 10

Step 11: Inhale slowly and deeply. Flex your ankle and move your foot as far as possible from one side to another in the opposite direction.



Figure 5-65 The Fourth Exercise, Step 11

Step 12: Exhale slowly and bring the foot back to its original position. Relax and swallow.



Figure 5-66 The Fourth Exercise, Step 12

Repeat the exercise with the right leg and foot. Repeat the exercise for each leg and foot three times. Be sure to maintain the basic posture.

5.3.2 Doing Exercises While Lying Down

Do these exercises daily at bedtime, in the morning before getting out of bed, before and after a nap.

1) The First Exercise

Step 1: The basic sleeping position

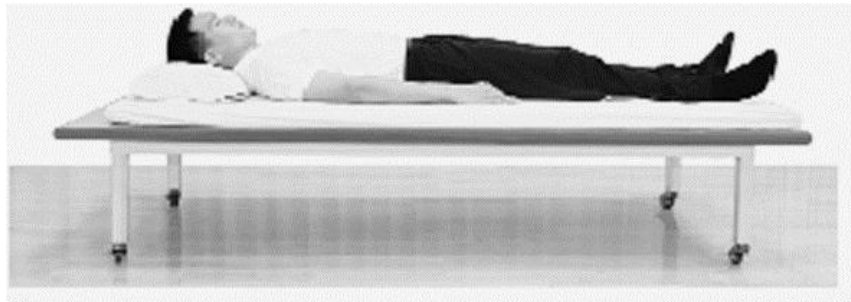


Figure 5-67 The Basic Sleeping Position

Step 2: Join your hands with the palms facing outward and hold them above your body as shown

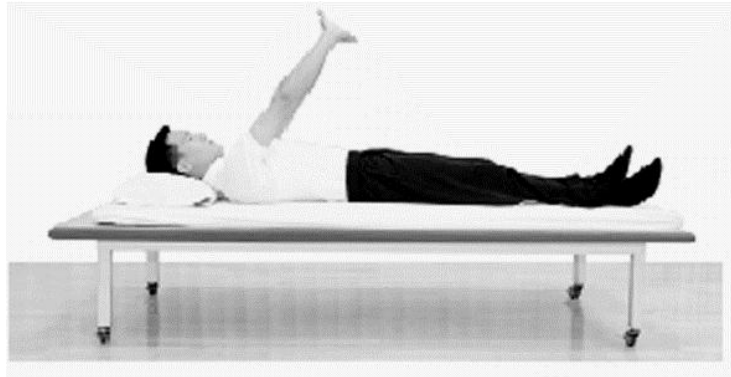


Figure 5-68 The First Exercise, Step 2

Step 3: Keep your arms straight while moving them above your head



Figure 5-69 The First Exercise, Step 3

Step 4: Continue to move your arms until they are parallel to your head and close to your ears. Inhale slowly and deeply and point your toes. Extend your feet and your arms all the way. Let the inhaled air expand your chest. Tighten the stomach muscles and tuck your chin under. The back is straight.

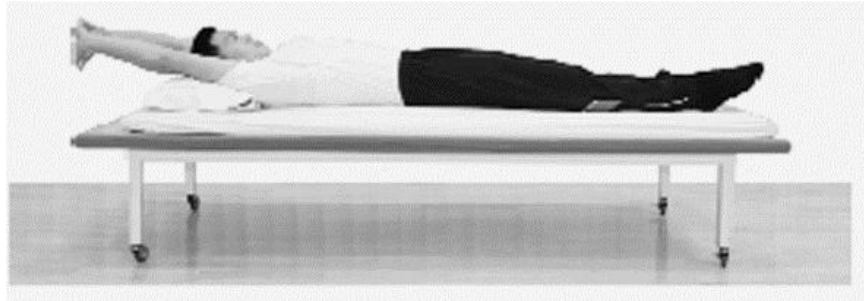


Figure 5-70 The First Exercise, Step 4

Step 5: Exhale slowly while you relax your joined hands and let them rest above your head.

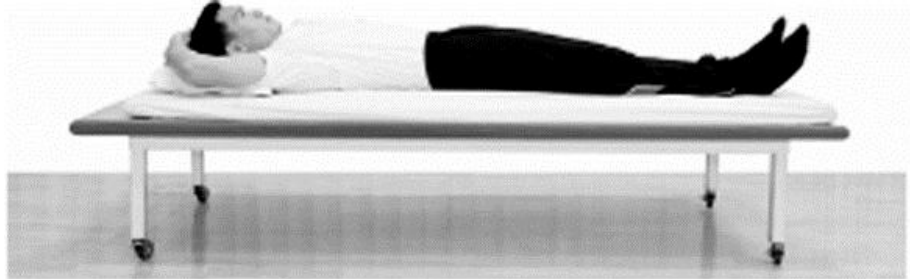


Figure 5-71 The First Exercise, Step 5

Step 6: Raise your joined hands above your head, over the body to the front and toward your feet as far as possible. Inhale slowly and deeply. Keep your legs straight while you flex your feet as much as possible. Tighten your stomach muscles and tuck your chin under.

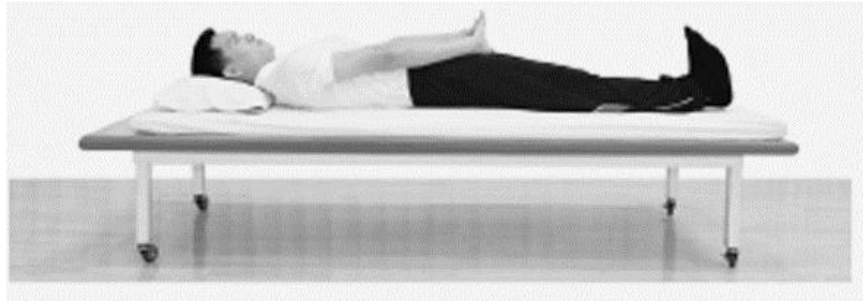


Figure 5-72 The First Exercise, Step 6

Step 7: Exhale slowly and relax. Rest your hands on your stomach.



Figure 5-73 The First Exercise, Step 7

Repeat this exercise five times.

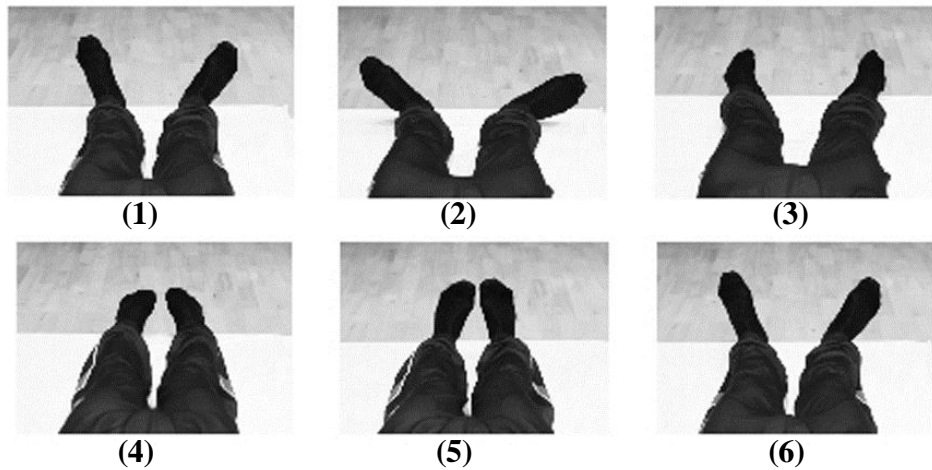
2) The Second Exercise

Step 1: Begin with the basic sleeping position with your hands resting on your stomach.



Figure 5-74 The Second Exercise, Step 1

Step 2: Maintain your basic posture by tucking your chin under, your shoulder blades pulled toward each other, your stomach muscles tightened, the legs and knees straight. Inhale slowly and deeply while rotating your ankles with your feet flexed and turned away from each other as much as possible.



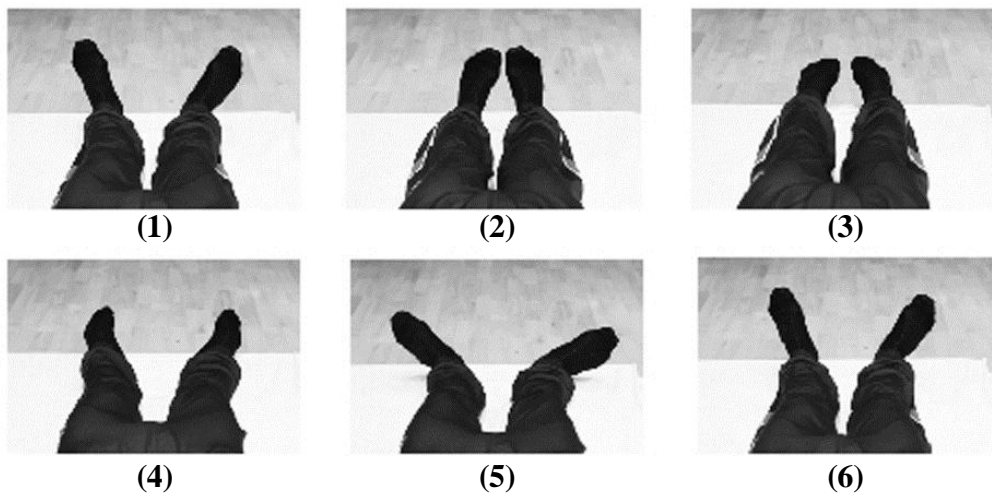
Figures 5 - (75 - 80) The Second Exercise, Step 2

Step 3: Exhale and relax. Maintain your basic posture.



Figure 5-81 The Second Exercise, Step 3

Step 4: Repeat the exercise this time by rotating the ankles in the opposite direction.



Figures 5 - (82-87) The Second Exercise, Step 4

Repeat the exercise by rotating the ankles in one direction and then another five to ten times or more. When carried out correctly, you should be able to feel the movement of the muscles from the legs, up to the back and the back of the skull. This exercise helps keep the spinal column in alignment.

Getting Out of Bed

Lie on your side and push your body up as shown in Figures 5-(88-91)

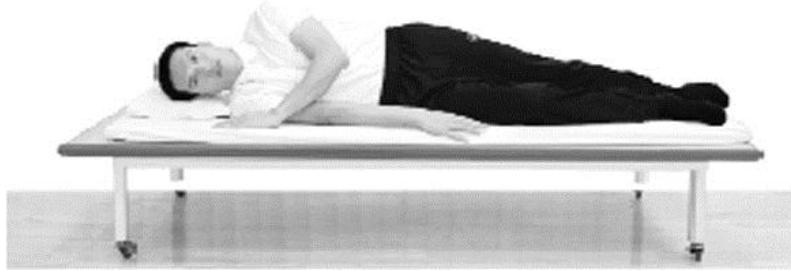


Figure 5-88 Getting Out of Bed (1)



Figure 5-89 Getting Out of bed (2)

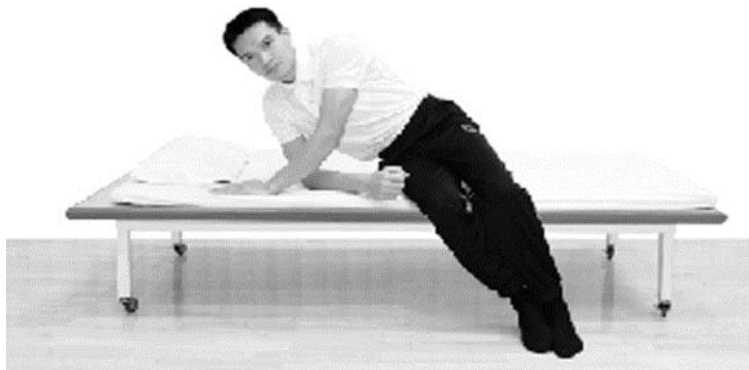


Figure 5-90 Getting Out of Bed (3)



Figure 5-91 Getting Out of Bed (4)

As you sit up, maintain your basic posture by straightening your upper body as you tighten your stomach muscles and thrust your chest upward. At the same time, pull your shoulder blades toward each other. Tuck your chin under. Keep your face parallel to the body. Keep the back of your neck and the back of your skull straight. Inhale slowly and deeply until the chest expands fully. Exhale and relax.

How Much Exercise Should One Do?

We should exercise our body at least once a day but it is best to do it a few times a day: when we wake up in the morning, during breaks at work, and in the evening. How much we can benefit from our physical exercise depends on the condition of our body. A body which is slightly out of alignment will see the benefit more quickly than a body which is grossly out of alignment. In the latter case, it will take a while for the body to be in alignment again.

There was a person who suffered from a terrible backache and neck-ache. Initially, he found it difficult to do the exercise. But once he felt that the exercise was helping, he was motivated to do the exercise every three hours. Three days later, he did the exercise every four hours. But now he only needs to do the exercise once or twice a day.

A Word of Caution

When you exercise, you need to make sure that you are following every step correctly and as explained above. If you are not careful and your postures are incorrect, the exercise will do more harm than good. You must also make sure that your spinal column is kept in alignment in whatever exercise you are doing.

Exercises

After you finish studying Chapter 5, complete the test and exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

THE BALANCED APPROACH TO GOOD HEALTH IN THE PRESENT DAYS (2)

**TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 6
THE BALANCED APPROACH TO GOOD HEALTH IN THE PRESENT
DAYS (2)**

- 6.1 Physical Exercises
- 6.2 Relaxing the Muscles and Tendons

CONCEPTS

- 1) Regular exercise will keep the muscles strong and flexible. Healthy muscles in turn keep the body in good alignment and better able to do work. The best forms of exercise are walking and running. We should walk or run for about 30 minutes at a time and we should do it at least three times a week.
- 2) There are a few methods which can be used to promote muscle and tendon wellness. These include massages, Yoga exercises, acupuncture, etc. When carried out properly, each method is effective in creating wellness for the muscles and tendons which in turn lead to a balanced body where each organ is allowed to do its work properly.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To enable the student to understand the importance of physical exercise, to know the different forms of exercise and how to carry them out correctly.
- 2) To enable the student to know the techniques especially the massages that can be employed to relax the muscles and tendons.

THE BALANCED APPROACH TO GOOD HEALTH IN THE PRESENT DAYS (2)

6.1 Physical Exercise

6.1.1 Why Should We Perform Physical Exercise?

There are four reasons why we should exercise regularly.

- 1) To strengthen our muscles and organs. Any part of the body which is being used often will remain strong and healthy. Disuse can cause certain parts of the body to atrophy. A right-handed person tends to have a more developed right arm when compared to the left arm.
- 2) To increase endurance of our muscles especially the heart muscle. Aerobic exercise helps the heart to beat faster; therefore, becomes stronger.
- 3) To maintain the flexibility of the muscles and joints.
- 4) To increase the mobility of the muscles and joints.

6.1.2 What Forms of Exercise Does Dr. Tavorn Think Are Suitable for People of Every Age?

We exercise in order to keep our body strong, flexible, agile, and most importantly balanced. As far as balance is concerned, the best forms of exercise are walking and running. The reason is that when we walk or run, our muscles, tendons, and connective tissue have to move in unison. To develop our muscles, it is very important that our postures are kept balanced at all times. When we walk, we should walk in a brisk manner using even steps. This way, our muscles, our heart, our organs, and joints can get the exercise they need.

Each time that we exercise we should do so continuously for about 30 minutes and we should exercise at least three times a week. Such time requirement may not be practical for some people. Fortunately, there are ways in which we can sort of exercise while we carry out our work. For example, at work, we can make it a habit to walk briskly as we breathe deeply and regularly. We can learn to maintain a balanced posture in whatever activity we are engaged.

Any form of physical exercise is beneficial as long as we do it properly.

6.1.3 What You Need to Pay Attention to When You Exercise

Bear in mind to maintain the balanced posture in which the spinal column is extended in order to ensure good blood and lymph circulation and normal transmission of nerve signals.

6.2 Relaxing the Muscles and Tendons

Muscle-strains occur when the muscles and tendons do not work together properly in that they do not relax and contract at the right time. The situation is caused by the impaired transmission of nerve signals. To correct the situation, the therapist must trace the muscles, nerves, and vertebrae which are dysfunctioning and are being stressed and strained to the point where blood circulation and the transmission of nerve signals are partially blocked. When the source of the problem is found, then relaxation technique can be employed to alleviate the situation.

The different relaxation techniques include massages, Yoga exercises, acupuncture, etc. When performed correctly, each of these techniques can be quite effective. However, for best results, once the muscles are in a relaxed state, one should perform the exercises described in Chapter 5 to enhance the body's balance and the harmonious working of the muscles, tendons, and connective tissue.

6.2.1 How Do Massages Work?

Massages are techniques which apply external force to work out the stress or strain in the muscles in order to improve blood and lymph circulation as well as the transmission of nerve signals and return them to normalcy. In treating muscle stress or strain, it is important not to massage the problem area alone because the root cause of the problem may lie somewhere else. It is better to begin by massaging the muscles on both sides of the spinal column until they are properly relaxed before addressing the problem area.

Thai massage is beneficial in that it works to extend and relax the muscles and tendons of the entire body and remove every muscle stress and strain.

6.2.2 The Effective Method to Massage Someone Who Experiences Aches and Pains from Meditation Practice

A person who practices meditation generally complains about backaches. This symptom usually arises from poor postures and can be alleviated by doing the following:

1) The Groin and Pelvis Areas

Lie down on your back and apply the end of your middle finger to the groin area below the pelvis to locate the strained muscles and connective tissues which when pressed will feel quite painful. Now use your index finger, your middle finger, and your ring finger (either one hand or both hands) and press the strained area by increasing the pressure gradually and apply the pressure for 15 – 30 seconds. Massage the area until it begins to relax. You should be able to notice that your leg begins to feel more relaxed and flexible. For some people, the backache may improve at this point.

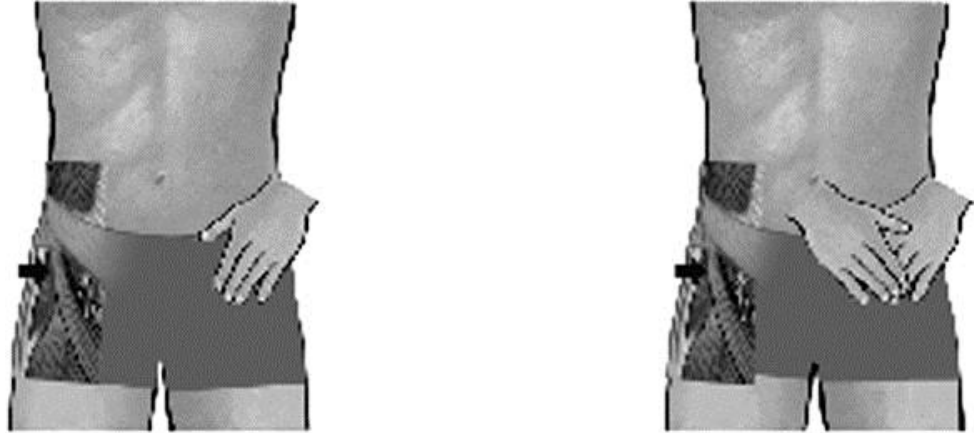


Figure 6-1 Massaging the Groin and Pelvis Areas

2) Massage the Muscles and Connective Tissues of the Abdomen

Lie down on your back with both knees up. Use the same three fingers from one or both hands and apply pressure on your abdomen starting from the groin area and the area above the pelvis. Increase the pressure gradually and apply the pressure for 15 – 30 seconds. Do this to every pressure point around your abdomen by repeating a few times at each point.



Figure 6-2 How to Place Your Hand(s) on Your Abdomen

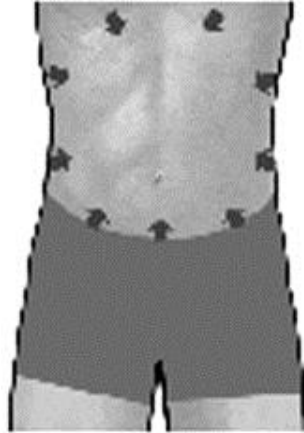


Figure 6-3 The Pressure Points around Your Abdomen

Next apply pressure to the middle of the abdomen starting from the pubic area up to the navel and the xiphisternal joint and all the muscles in the surrounding area within three fingers' width from the center. Repeat each point a few times until it feels more relaxed to the touch.

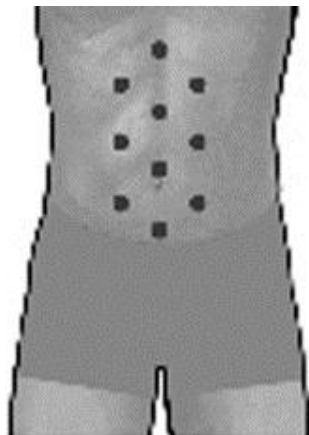


Figure 6-4 The Pressure Points around the Abdomen

Once the muscles and connective tissues of the abdomen are relaxed, the backache will be gone.

3) **Massaging Your Own Back**

You can do this by using a chair which has sharp corners (Figure 6-5). Place the chair against a wall. Sit on the floor close to the chair with your neck close to the corner of the chair. Press your neck against the corner of the chair (Figure 6.6). If this is too painful, you can cover the corner with a towel first. Next, press your back against the corner of the chair and massage the spinal column and the muscles on both sides of the spinal column. Work from the neck to the shoulder blade to the middle of the back. Work on the part that feels painful repeatedly until the pain is gone. You may have to squat in order to maneuver your body and work it against the corner of the chair all the way down to the tailbone. After a few practices, you will have a better idea of how to treat your back problems.

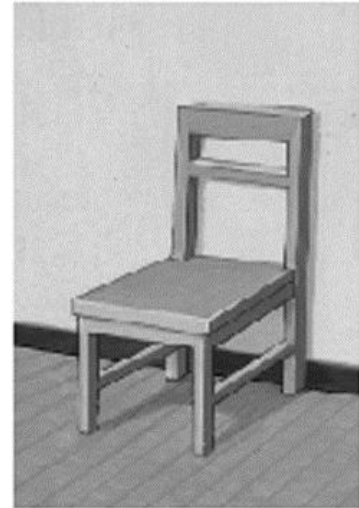


Figure 6-5 A Sharpe -Corner Chair

You can also use a massaging implement called a breast-shaped support which is made of wood and can be found in the market. However, you need to select one which fits properly the space between the muscles to the left and right of your spinal column. Using the breast-shape support is easy. Just lie on top of the implement and allow the curves of the implement to cradle your back muscles. Move the implement up and down your spine. Or you can choose to stand flush against the edge of a wardrobe or a door frame and slowly press your back muscles against it.



Figure 6.6

Massaging by Using Sharp Corner



Figure 6-7 Massaging by Using Door Frame

After a good back massage and your muscles are in a relaxed state, you need to do the exercises described in Chapter 5 in order to keep your body balanced and in good alignment. Otherwise, the pain may come back in no time. It is very important to maintain a balanced posture whatever you are doing. This way you can help keep your body healthy and working properly at all times.

Exercises

After you finish studying Chapter 6, complete the test and exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

MAKING IT A HABIT TO KEEP YOUR BODY STRUCTURE BALANCED

TOPICS COVERED IN CHAPTER 7

MAKING IT A HABIT TO KEEP YOUR BODY STRUCTURE BALANCED

- 7.1 What Is Habit?
- 7.2 The Fruits of Good Habits
- 7.3 The Lord Buddha's Approach to Developing Good Habits
- 7.4 How to Develop Good Habits
- 7.5 How to Develop Lasting Good Habits
- 7.6 Good Habits Are Conducive to a Balanced Body Structure

CONCEPTS

The preceding chapters have provided some details about the way to keep the body structure balanced. The next step is to put the knowledge into practice and develop it into a habit so that you can enjoy good health always.

OBJECTIVES

To enable the student to put what he/she has learnt in this course into practice and make it a habit to keep his/her body in a balanced state.

MAKING IT A HABIT TO KEEP YOUR BODY STRUCTURE BALANCED

7.1 What Is Habit?

Habit is usual behavior. It is a thing that you do often and almost without thinking. Once a habit has been formed, it is here to stay.

A person with good habits has learnt to think, speak, and do only things that are beneficial to himself and others. Good habits include punctuality, cleanliness, generosity, etc.

A person with bad habits has learnt to think, speak, and do things that are destructive to himself and others. Bad habits include different types of addiction, laziness, selfishness, ill-will, lack of discipline, etc.

7.2 The Fruits of Good Habits

Human beings are made up of body and mind. Unfortunately, both our body and mind are diseased. Diseases in the mind are what the Lord Buddha calls “defilements”. Defilements work to degrade a person’s mind. They force the mind to think, speak, and do bad things so often that they turn into bad habits.

A person with bad habits tends to do bad deeds so often and without thinking that his mind will eventually deteriorate to the point where he cannot see the virtue of good deeds and is resistant to advices from a virtuous friend.

Therefore it is very important to develop good habits as a child before its defilements force it to commit too many bad deeds regularly. Good habits foster good deeds and allow one to understand the harm of bad deeds and the benefits of good deeds. When a person performs good deeds and deeds of merit regularly, the merit earned will in turn help him to meet with happiness and success in life.

7.3 The Lord Buddha’s Approach to Developing Good Habits

The Lord Buddha teaches the monks to form good habits by meticulously considering the four requisites before consuming them¹. The monks are to meticulously consider the fact that the saffron robes are used to protect them from the heat, the cold, the wind, the sun, insects and reptiles as well as to cover up certain parts of the body.

The monks are to meticulously consider the food received from their alms-round in that food consumption is not for pleasure, entertainment or beauty but for sustaining their body and relieving their hunger so that they can continue to practice renunciation and chastity.

The monks are to meticulously consider their shelter in that it serves to protect them from the heat, the cold, the wind, the sun, insects and reptiles. It also serves to provide them with a place which is conducive to their meditation practice.

¹ *Sāliputtasutanites Khuddakanikāya Mahānites*, MCU, vol. 66, p. 609

The monks are to meticulously consider the role of medications in that they are to relieve the pain and suffering that result from an illness.

By teaching the monks to consider the four requisites meticulously, the Lord Buddha is in effect teaching them to develop awareness in everything that they think, say, and do. Such a habit makes sure that the monks do not form an attachment to any material thing but that they should continue to practice meditation in order to penetrate the Path of Enlightenment.

7.4 How to Develop Good Habits

In life, there are two main areas where habits need to be developed.

1. **Personal Routine:** It deals with the management of the four necessities which include clothing, food, shelter, and medicine. It also includes personal hygiene and personal health care.
2. **Work Routine:** It deals with one's job and responsibilities as an employee, housewife, a monk, etc.

Since habit is a thing that we do often and almost without thinking, it means that in order for us to form a certain habit, we have to conscientiously train our self to do it repeatedly until it eventually becomes a habit. To develop good habits, we need to choose to do often only good things while at the same time break any bad habit that has already been formed. We can start by paying attention to what we think, say, and do and consciously choose to think, say, and do only wholesome things frequently and regularly. We can begin by working on our personal routine before embarking upon our work routine.

7.5 How to Develop Lasting Good Habits?

Once we have formed good habits, it is very important that we continue to improve upon them. There are three ways which can help us to maintain our good habits so that they will last.

1. We need to stay away from people that have bad habits because they can have a bad influence on us.
2. We need to surround our self with people that have good habits and with people who are good role models so that we can learn from their examples and continue to maintain our good habits.
3. We need to practice meditation regularly because it will help us to develop insight and motivate us to do more and more good deeds.

7.6 Good Habits Are Conducive to a Balanced Body Structure

When we can learn self-discipline by keeping a good and balanced posture at all times, we are already forming a very good habit. When we are young, our body may be able to keep on working properly in spite of our poor postures. However, as we get older, the aging process coupled with our poor postures can wreak havoc to our health and we may experience acute as well as chronic pain in certain parts of our body. However, if we start

young enough to learn about how to maintain a good posture and to exercise regularly until they become a habit, then we will have gone a long way toward keeping our body healthy.

However, in spite of our best efforts; it is possible that we may at times encounter a serious illness. In that case, our meditation practice can help us to assuage the pain and suffering caused by the illness and at times even heal the illness altogether as illustrated by a story recorded in the ‘Girimananda Sutta’¹. The Lord Buddha told Phra Ananda to visit a sick monk by the name of Phra Girimananda. During the visit, he was to recite to the sick monk the Dhamma topic about ‘The Ten Perceptions’. The Lord Buddha told Phra Ananda that as soon as the sick monk heard the end of the lecture, he would be well.

When Phra Girimananda listened to the Dhamma lecture delivered by Phra Ananda, he realized that the Lord Buddha was reminding him to keep his mind quiet and still in spite of his illness. As soon as he was able to subdue his mind, his pain and suffering instantly disappeared.

The Lord Buddha also teaches that a mind, which has been well-trained through meditation practice, is clear and bright and at the moment of death, such a state of mind will be destined for the States of Happiness.

**“Citte asankilitthe sugati patikankha
When the mind is clear and bright; when it is not sad and gloomy,
it is destined for the States of Happiness.”²**

Good habits make it easier for us to resist the dictate of our defilements. Good habits are instrumental in keeping us in good health. Good habits bring us a healthy body and a healthy mind. A healthy body facilitates our meditation practice and makes it easier for us to attain the Dhammakaya. The attainment of the Dhammakaya is the key to our peace and happiness in life both here on earth and in the States of Happiness in the hereafter.

Every sentient being undergoes birth, existence, and death.

We must make our life truly worthwhile by endeavoring to perform only wholesome deeds and work toward the Path of Enlightenment. These worthwhile pursuits are made possible by a healthy body.

Keeping a good posture is instrumental to a healthy body.

Keeping our body in a balanced state requires awareness.

Awareness comes when our mind has been trained to be still at the center of our body at all times through meditation practice.

¹ *Aṅguttaranikāya Dsakanipāta* MCU, vol.24, p.128 - 133

² *Majjhimanikāya Mūlapanṇaṭṭa* MCU, vol.12, p. 62

Exercises

After you finish studying Chapter 7, complete the test and exercises provided in the workbook.